

BECOMING GOD

DEIFICATION FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT

LECTURE 8: CAPTAIN COOK

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COOK // LONO



Who's Cook?

James Cook (1728-1779)

- British explorer, navigator, cartographer, and captain in the Royal Navy.
- Detailed maps of Newfoundland
- Three trips in the Pacific
- Eastern coast of Australia
- Hawaii
- Circumnavigation of New Zealand

Who's Lono?

- Fertility, agriculture, rainfall, music, peace
- AKA: Lono-Makua
- Kū, Kāne, Kanaloa
- The Makahiki Festival



Cook @ Hawaii (1776-1780)



1776-1780

Makahiki



What's in a name?



maka = 'eye' (refers to the constellation of the Pleiades)

hiki = movement

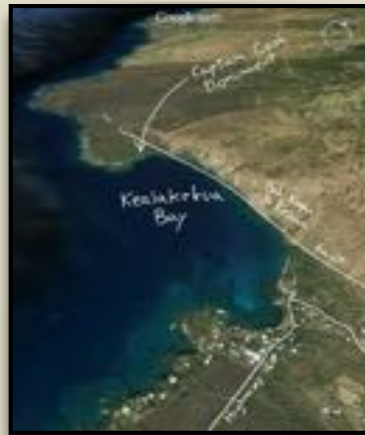
The rising of the Pleiades in the heavens

Sun's turn northward, bringing warmth again to earth, the growth of plants, and the spawning of fish.

The Festival

- Athletic sports
- A symbol of Lono was carried from district to district to collect taxes (*'auhau*) in the shape of products given in return for the use of the land distributed by each overlord among his family group
- Ceremony of basket-work (*wa'a-'auhau*; literally 'tribute-canoe') sent adrift to represent the canoe in which Lono returned to Tahiti
- (As if) Lono of the Makahiki had once appeared in the person of some voyager who brought culture gifts, introduced athletic sports, perhaps also the Polynesian custom of the *ho'okupu* or tributary offering sent to sea to feed the god and would come back to the people in abundant crops for the coming season

What a coincidence!!



- Bering Strait
- Sailed around Hawaii islands for c. 8 weeks looking for a suitable port
- Kealahou Bay (Jan 17, 1779)
- Makahiki period
- HMS *Resolution* resembled certain significant artefacts that formed part of the season of worship
- Cook's clockwise route around the island of Hawaii

Stepping on soil, elevated to divinity: King

Captain James King



"were received by four men, who carried wands tipped with dog's hair, and marched before us, pronouncing with a loud voice a short sentence, in which we could only distinguish the word Orono.... The crowd, which had been collected on the shore, retired at our approach; and not a person was to be seen, except a few lying prostrate on the ground, near the huts of the adjoining village."

Stepping on soil, elevated to divinity: King

"During the rest of the time we remained in the bay, whenever Captain Cook came on shore, he was attended by one of these priests, who went before him, giving notice that the Orono had landed, and ordering people to prostrate themselves. The same person also constantly accompanied him on the water, standing in the bow of the boat, with a wand in his hand, and giving notice of his approach to the natives, who were in canoes, on which they immediately left off paddling, and lay down on their faces till he had passed. Whenever he stopped at the observatory, Kaireekea [Keli'-ikea] and his brethren immediately made their appearance with hogs, cocoa-nuts, bread-fruit, &c. and presented them with the usual solemnities. It was on these occasions that some of the inferior chiefs frequently requested to be permitted to make an offering to the Orono. When this was granted, they presented the hog themselves, generally with evident marks of fear on their countenances; whilst Kaireekea and the priests chanted their accustomed hymns."

Stepping on soil, elevated to divinity: Clerke

Captain Charles Clerke



“[Cook] was received with the accustomed respect they upon all occasions paid him, which more resembled that due to a Deity than a human being”

Stepping on soil, elevated to divinity: Kamakau

Samuel M. Kamakau (1815-1876)

“...when Captain Cook appeared they declared that his name must be Lono, for Kealakekua was the home of that deity as a man, and it was a belief of the ancients that he had gone to Kahiki and would return. They were full of joy, all the more so that these were Lono’s tabu days [i.e., the Makahiki]. Their happiness knew no bounds; they leaped for joy: "Now shall our bones live; now *'aumakua* [ancestor-spirit] has come back. These are his tabu days and he has returned!" This was a great mistake. He was a long-tailed god, a scorpion, a slayer of men. What a pity! But they believed in him and shouted, ‘Lono is a god! Lono is a god!’”



Mortal death or the dying god?



When will he return?

The dismemberment of Cook's body

Captain King's narration:

[one had] 'shed abundance of tears at the loss of the Erono'
[asked a most] 'Singular question ... & that was when the Erono
would return, this was demanded afterwards by others, & what he
would do to them when he return'd'

“agrees with the general tenour of their conduct toward him,
which shewed, that they considered him as a being of a superior
nature”

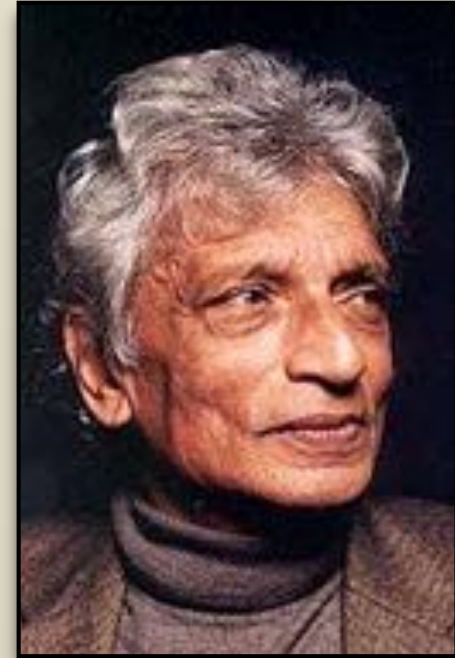
Aftermath

“The Natives seem to consider that melancholy transaction [Cook’s death] as one of the most remarkable events in their History, almost every child able to prattle can give you an account of it, and in reckoning back to distant periods, which they do by memorable occurrences, and knowing the distances of time from one to another, this transaction seems to assist their calculations in a very great degree; at that time they look'd up to him as to a supernatural being, indeed called him the 'Orono' or great God, nor has he to this day lost any of his character or consequence with the Natives they still in speaking of him style him the Orono and if they are to be believ'd, most sincerely regret his fate.”

Edward Bell

The Apotheosis never occurred!

“When James Cook arrived during the [Makahiki] festival in two large ships with a large number of people who neither looked Polynesian nor spoke the native language, the Hawaiians, it is said, thought he was the god Lano. By contrast, I argue in this book that Cook's arrival would *violate* Hawaiian commonsense expectations, though it could be consonant with European assumptions regarding native perceptions of white ‘civilizers.’”



Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis Of Captain Cook : European Mythmaking In The Pacific*, 1992 (p. 20)

The language of the gods

In the Sandwich Islands, the language of liturgy is a special language, which differs from the language spoken today. Commoners do not understand it; it is probably the unchanged ancient language of this people... Information from Tahiti is in agreement on this point. (Adelbert van Chamisso, 1816)

It is astonishing to see what moral darkness covers their hearts. They told me that before they did not know what we meant by prayer, but supposed we meant telling long stories which neither we nor any one knew what they meant, as was the custom of their priests. (Reverend Whitney, 1821)

The physique of the gods

“All of these gods, whether worshipped by the common people or by the *alii* [chiefs], were thought to reside in the heavens. Neither commoner nor chief had ever discovered their nature; their coming and their going was unseen; their breadth, their length and their dimensions were unknown.”

(Malo, David. 1951. *Hawaiian antiquities*, 83)

WHAT DID THE DEIFICATION OF COOK MEAN?



Q & A

- The importance for the Hawaiians
- The importance for the Europeans
- Reception
- Coincidence as factor
- Ante & Post Mortem deification
- Who benefited eventually?

Next: U.S. Presidents

