HENRI J.M. CLAESSEN

Learning and training

Education in eighteenth-century traditional Polynesia

Introduction

In this article some methods and types of education in traditional Polynesia are presented. The emphasis is on the second half of the eighteenth century. I have selected this period partly because it covers the final years of the Polynesian culture before it was deeply influenced by the well-intentioned efforts of missionaries and administrators who tried to eradicate heathen customs and introduce clothing; the introduction of reading and writing; and the negative impact of traders, whalers and colonizers who came to the islands to relax after arduous travels, and to buy cheap goods and food. The other reason for focusing on this period is that many voyagers, missionaries, administrators and traders in their logs and journals left us detailed descriptions of the islanders and their cultures as they had seen them and tried to understand them. These publications are considered here as ‘sources’. Two of the concepts mentioned so far may need some clarification, namely ‘Polynesia’ and ‘sources’.

Polynesia, for the purposes of this article, encompasses all the islands lying in the triangle formed by the Hawaiian Islands, Easter Island and New Zealand. I am aware that Roger Green in 1991 coined the label ‘Remote Oceania’ encompassing Polynesia, Micronesia and the eastern part of Melanesia, thus superseding the traditional tripartite division devised by Dumont d’Urville in 1831 (Ryan 2002) and applied for instance by Kirch and Green (2001) and D’Arcy (2006). For this article, however, the traditional concept of Polynesia is sufficient. Polynesia is considered here to be an area whose inhabitants share a common culture and a common language. Within Polynesia, the various island cultures are, so to say, variations on a theme (Claessen and Van Bakel 2006). The first visitor to notice similarities between the populations of islands as distant from each other as Easter Island and the Samoa Islands was...
Jacob Roggeveen (1838:190-5), but he could not understand this. The clearest notion of a general pattern is found in the journal of James Cook (1969:279, 354-5), who during his visit to Easter Island (Rapa Nui) in 1774 observed:

In Colour, Features, and Languages they [the Easter Islanders] bear such an affinity to the people of the more Western isles that no one will doubt but that they have the same Origin, it is extraordinary that the same Nation should have spread themselves over all the isles in this Vast Ocean from New Zealand to this island which is almost a fourth part of the circumference of the Globe, many of them at this time have no other knowledge of each other than which is recorded in antiquated tradition and have by length of time become as it were different Nations each having adopted some peculiar customs or habit&ca nevertheless a careful observer will soon see the Affinity each has to the other.

During his visit to Easter Island in 1786, the French explorer La Pérouse (1994:64-5) confirmed Cook’s observations. Also Johann Reinhold Forster (1996:153, 172, 183), the naturalist on Cook’s second voyage (1772-1775), in his Observations, points repeatedly to similarities among Polynesian languages and cultures, and similar observations were made by Lieutenant King (1967:1392-3) on Cook’s third voyage. The view that Polynesians share a common culture and a common language – though with local variations – is agreed on by many students of the region.1 In a recent article Van Bakel and I (Claessen and Van Bakel 2006) attempt to explain the development of variations in the socio-political organization of Polynesian islands. On the basis of the views presented in that article, I consider Polynesia as a cultural whole with local variations.

The second concept in need of some clarification is ‘sources’. When do we speak of sources? Sources are places – books, notes, letters, journals, but also pictures or potsherds – where the scholar can find useful information. How trustworthy are sources? The sources on traditional Polynesia were written over a period of roughly 250 years, beginning with the journals of Le Maire and Schouten (1618, 1622; reprinted in 1945) and ending with a number of missionary books and reports published in the mid-nineteenth century. ‘It goes without saying that not all are of equal value’ (Valeri 1985:xvii). In several earlier publications I have tried to establish the trustworthiness of the sources on Polynesia (Claessen 1978:535-7, 2000, 2003). It is not possible here to go into this matter deeply. Some of the findings, however, can be summarized and may be of use in interpreting these sources. In the first place it is of great help when more than one source on a certain subject (an island, a custom) exists. Comparison can

make clear which of the authors is more detailed, or more objective. No author is ever wholly without prejudices. They all are children of their time, and inevitably write with the prejudices of their time. (This is not to suggest that anthropologists are without prejudices; in their case, however, these are usually called ‘theories’.) Letters and reports by missionaries, for example, are often coloured by their religious background and thus heathen customs are strongly condemned. Some of them, however, their prejudices notwithstanding, wrote important works on the societies with which they became thoroughly familiar (for example W. Ellis, J.M. Orsmond, T. Henry, S. Farmer, T. West, J.B. Stair, G. Turner, H. Bingham, H. Laval). Traders concentrate mainly on landing places, harbours, agriculture and handicrafts, but also in their works can be found interesting observations (Turnbull 1806). For whom is the observer writing? Is it for the ship owner, who has sent him to explore commercial possibilities; is it the report of a missionary to the directors of his missionary society; or is the report written for a learned society? Obviously the contents of such reports will vary greatly, even if they describe the same island or the same situation. An additional problem is that there are often great differences between the actual log of a voyage and the story carefully rewritten later, intended for a large audience. Many captains (Cook, Bougainville and others) used the long voyage home to write such an adaptation in which tedious details like wind and rain have been left out (Kommers 1989).

Incidentally, I also use some anthropological publications on Polynesia which are, it is true, from a much later date, but which are useful because they concentrate on the same period of time and are for the greater part based on early descriptions (Oliver 1974; Sahlins 1985; Claessen 1997). With the help of such publications some aspects can be better understood or placed into a more encompassing framework, and sometimes additional data can be found. In view of the scarcity of data, only a few of the many islands are discussed in this article; it is a selection, and, like all selections, is subjective.

While time, region and sources can be easily described, the concept of ‘education’ is quite tricky to define. In educational anthropology, a branch of cultural anthropology, the emphasis is on the analysis of formal (western) school systems and the question of how children succeed (or do not succeed) in getting formal schooling (Ogbu 1996). This approach offers no perspectives for traditional Polynesia, where no such types of schools existed. Other anthropologists place the concept of education in the more general framework of cultural transmission (Stafford 1996). In this approach there is no need to concentrate on formal systems of learning, but instead, all types of learning are of interest, especially informal ones. Learning processes (or inculcation) are, according to their proponents, ‘embedded in a variety of practical contexts: the use of space, the cooking of food, the giving of gifts, etc.’ (Stafford 1996:178). These scholars are aware that traditional learning sometimes also
takes place in rather formal contexts, or in the form of apprenticeships, and they include these forms in their research. In this article the second approach to education, the framework of cultural transmission, is followed. It should be emphasized that in traditional Polynesia all transmission was oral; there were no written texts. Knowledge was conveyed by teaching by example and by means of chants or maxims, and everything had to be memorized.

Although generally speaking the process of cultural transmission forms a whole, it is, if only for practical reasons, possible to distinguish several specific areas of education. In the first place, there are the ways in which the young are trained in everyday skills, in religion and how their society is organized, and in their behaviour towards elders or persons of the opposite sex. In the second place, most islands have specialists, such as priests, navigators, and stage managers, whose more formal schooling is also addressed in this article. It should be emphasized that our knowledge of educational processes is fragmentary, for the Europeans who visited traditional Polynesia were interested mainly in phenomena such as politics, religious conversion, sex or trade. Yet, scattered in their logs and journals, interesting comments on education can be found. As a consequence, our knowledge of education in the Polynesian islands varies greatly. About the educational situation in some islands much is known, while about other islands we know next to nothing.

Education at home

It seems natural to start an overview of cultural transmission at its beginning, with the education children get at home and in the family. Here the basic rules of social life are learned: how to behave towards family members and neighbours, and the skills necessary for handling the group’s material culture. Children are taught the proper ways to address parents, grandparents, and other members of the family. They also learn to behave differently towards the various members of the group. In this way they become versed in the intricacies of the kinship system. After some years children also start to learn the tasks they will have to perform later, as adult men or women. The boys learn many of these skills from their fathers, uncles, elder brothers, neighbours, and perhaps even more from their age-mates, with whom they spend a lot of time. The girls learn from their mothers, elder sisters, aunts, and, of course, also from the girls next door. One of the few foreign visitors who not only observed these activities but also wrote a coherent statement about it is Johann Reinhold Forster, the naturalist on Cook’s second voyage (1772-1775).2

2 On J.R. Forster, see the introductory chapters to his Observations made during a voyage round the world, edited by Nicholas Thomas, Harriet Guest, and Michael Dettelbach (1996).
His description, based mainly on his observations of Tahitian and Tongan children, is couched in detailed, long-winded prose, but has the advantage of being rather complete:

The first notions necessary for the way of life now in use in these islands, are instilled into the tender minds of the children by their parents: these notions may be divided into various branches, as varied as the objects are to which they relate; the more universally necessary objects of all nations, are food, raiment, and shelter against the inclemencies of the weather; the operations therefore relative to food, dress and habitation are the first, which are taught the children by their parents. As these nations [the Polynesians] have not yet a multiplicity of artificial wants, and as their time is not yet taken up with any business more material than the three enumerated articles, their manufactures are in consequence very simple, and undivided in many branches; nay they are all thought necessary for every individual in these isles, and for that reason every child is instructed in the best methods of cultivating the bread-fruit tree, the plantane-stalks, the roots of yams, and other eatable roots; the most expeditious ways for catching fish, the proper season and bait for each kind, and the places which they haunt and resort to, are told to their children; nay all the fishes, shells, and blubbers, which in any ways may with safety be eaten, are named and shewed to them, together with their nature, food, haunts and qualities; the devices for catching birds, for rearing dogs, swine, and fowls, and all the names of spontaneous eatable plants are communicated to their youths, together with their seasons and qualities; so that there is hardly a boy of 10 to 12 years old, who is not perfectly well acquainted with these articles. But as the bark of the mulberry tree, requisite for raiment, must be cultivated with a great deal of care and application, their youths are well instructed in the methods necessary for that purpose; and every young woman is early instructed in all the operations requisite for manufacturing and dyeing their cloth, and likewise in those of making mats, and other parts of their dress. The wood which is best calculated for building a house, a canoe, or other utensils, together with every operation for erecting a habitation, for making the various parts of a boat, and for navigating it by paddles or sails, are understood by every person, from the last toutou [servant] to the first chief of the land. In short, there is not one mechanical operation, which they do not teach to every youth, and which, after some time, he is not capable of executing with as much adroitness and skill as the best and oldest man in the nation.3

Forster here gives a rather complete inventory of what the average boy or girl was taught at home. Interestingly, some elements of education are not

---

3 J.R. Forster 1996:270. Though not stated explicitly, the data on education are based mainly on Forster's research on Tahiti. For a short summary of education in the Tonga Islands, see Tupouniua 1977:52; Paongo 1990:135. Data on education in the Samoa Islands can be found in Mead (1968:267-72), who gives a rather rigid picture of children's education in which the brother-sister tapu plays an important role, and where competition is omnipresent (see also Stair 1983:177; Stair was a missionary who lived in Samoa from 1838 to 1845).
Learning and training

mentioned by Forster. First, he gives no indication how children were made familiar with the social, political and religious notions of their society. And, in view of the complex hierarchical socio-political structure in most of the islands, some introduction to this bewildering reality would have been useful. Most probably children picked up many of these notions from the behaviour and comments of the adults around them, or memorized chants and proverbs in which aspects of behaviour were formulated. There are few indications that explicit instructions in this area were given, with the exception of the children – sons – of chiefs and other high notables who sometimes were carefully instructed in the obligations of their future roles. Moerenhout (1837, II:59-61) also presents an overview of education and training of the young. He explicitly states that boys sometimes received formal training in ‘religious ceremonies at marae’. Most probably he is referring to the schools mentioned by Henry (1951:81, 86, 91), where teachers of wide learning instructed young men (Henry 1951:161). These additions are not to suggest that Forster was unaware of the important role of chiefs, priests, marae (temples), gods, or offerings. On the contrary. However, he did not include these aspects in his summary of education. The second aspect that is sadly lacking in his description is how the young learned to behave towards the opposite sex. As this behaviour was much more intricate than would be expected on the basis of the views of European sailors (summarized in Claessen 1997), a separate section will be devoted to this subject. That Forster did not discuss it is perhaps not surprising in view of his rather ambiguous views on Polynesian women. On the one hand, he idealizes them somewhat in his Observations, where he states that marriage and reproduction are unproblematic and a matter of pleasing expectation to Tahitians, a situation which he compares favourably with the many difficulties ‘preceding and attendant on our marriages’ (J.R. Forster 1996:146, 148). In his private journal, however, his views on Polynesian women (and also on those of other peoples) are less flattering. Here he rejects the free sexual behaviour exhibited by many women of the islands to procure iron nails, hatchets, or other trifles. ‘Their women coquet in the most impudent manner, & shew uncommon fondness for Foreigners, but are all Jilts & coach the Foreigners out of anything they can get’ (J.R. Forster, in Hoare 1982:356-7).

Returning to Forster’s summary of the education of the young at home, his

4 The children of the ariʻi rahi Pomare I, in Tahiti, grew up in close seclusion, coached and cared for by older and trusted servants (Bligh 1952:53-4). The children of the tui longa grew up at court, where the mother and aunts and uncles gave them some education (Bott 1982:98-100; Paongo 1990:135). Sahlins (1985:10) mentions the sexual education of chiefly children in Hawaiʻi. Perhaps the Samoan taupou – the village virgin – should also be mentioned in this respect; usually the daughter of the village head, she lead an exemplary life, and acted as a kind of hostess when visitors arrived.
overview seems largely applicable to the whole of Polynesia, with, of course, local variations. A good example of such variation is the preparation of bark cloth or *tapa*, made from the bark of the mulberry tree.\(^5\) Though the methods of preparing *tapa* showed great similarities in the various islands, there were many differences in the decorations of the cloth, in the uses to which it was put, and in how it was preserved (for an overview see Kooijman 1972, 1977). In some islands *tapa* was used mainly as clothing, and the size of the pieces was oriented towards that use. Elsewhere, as in the Tonga Islands, and in the Moce Island (Fiji Islands), large pieces of beautifully decorated *tapa* were given as presents on the occasion of a marriage. These pieces were produced by groups of women and girls, and proudly exhibited before being given away (Kooijman 1977). Such differences require different emphases in the training of girls.

The same holds for the practising of horticulture. Differences in soil, climate and fertility played a large role. Van Bakel (1989), who made a detailed comparison of five Polynesian societies (the Hawaiian Islands, Rapa, Samoa, Mangareva and the Marquesas Islands), states that – apart from coconuts and bananas – the staple food of the Hawaiian Islands and Rapa was taro, while in Mangareva and the Marquesas Islands breadfruit was the staple crop. He emphasizes that the production of taro could be increased easily (Ladefoget et al. 2003, 2008), but that the production of breadfruit was difficult to increase because of the space required by the trees. On Rapa, situated just outside the tropics, the breadfruit tree did not grow at all, as the island is too cold. Here all available land was in use for raising taro. On the other hand, Mangareva was too dry to grow taro, and the periods of aridity in the Marquesas Islands were too long and too frequent to make it worthwhile to raise taro there. Apparently, the cultivation of dry-land taro was not known there. In both islands the breadfruit tree was thus the staple crop.\(^6\) The differences in staple crop inevitably produced differences in the instruction of the young with regard to food production and preparation.

As the Polynesians lived on islands, some knowledge of seafaring and canoe building was essential for all men. Women, however, were not supposed to be seafarers. In the best case they were allowed on board as passengers – as certainly must have been the case when Polynesian seafarers set out to colonize newly discovered islands. If women had not boarded their ships, the new settlements could never have been populated. In later

---

5 According to Kooijman (1972:1), this tree is not indigenous in Polynesia, but was brought here by settlers from eastern Asia.

6 Van Bakel 1989:170-1; Kirch 1994:278-9, 304-5. Interestingly, Kirch (1991:128) states elsewhere that archaeological research has shown that the growth of taro (both the wet and the dry variants) was important in the Marquesas Islands.
Learning and training

331

times too, women accompanied men on long-distance voyages, as appears from the composition of the crew of a Tongan twin-hulled boat encountered by the Dutch voyagers Schouten and Le Maire in 1616. The early visitors’ reports contain several mentions of girls and women coming to their ships in canoes, as is stated in the journals of George Robertson, the master of the *Dolphin*, who anchored near Tahiti in June 1767 (Robertson 1948:40), and Bougainville, who reached Tahiti in April 1768 (Bougainville 1966:185-6).

Elsewhere, the great majority of women and girls had to swim to reach the foreigners’ ships, though sometimes women were in canoes, as appears from the journal of Etienne Marchand, who anchored in June 1791 at Tahuata in the Marquesas Islands (Marchand 2005:260-1; Thomas 1990:76-7). The missionaries of the ‘Duff’ (Wilson 1799:130) mention only swimming women, and canoeing men (also Melville 1959:164-5). Regarding the Tonga Islands, James Cook’s journal mentions numerous canoes, in which he only noticed men (Cook 1969:245, 248), and Georg Forster refers only to swimming girls.7 Arago (1823, II:19) notes for Hawai’i that men sailed in boats, while women used only simple planks on which they ‘elegantly’ manoeuvred on the water. Apparently customs in the various islands differed in this respect – and thus education varied.

At an early age boys were instructed in the knowledge of boats and navigation. They started with toys, and soon learned how to manoeuvre their small boats on the waves, an experience that grew when they were old enough to be instructed in handling real canoes. According to D’Arcy (2006:86), in the Caroline Islands of Micronesia ‘men had to pass a sailing test before they were allowed to marry’. The need for all men to be able seafarers was much greater in the small islands and atolls than in the larger ones (Arago 1823, I:399-408; Alkire 1978). In the large islands seafaring had become more and more the business of certain families or lineages – a form of guilds – and many adult men went to sea only occasionally, usually for some coastal fishing (D’Arcy 2006). The schooling of navigators will be discussed in a separate section.

In view of Foster’s statement that all boys learned the basics of house building, it should be mentioned that there was great variation in house types, too. There were rectangular houses in Tahiti, oval houses in Tonga and Samoa, houses on stone platforms in the Marquesas Islands and Mangaia, while in Rapa the houses were grouped within forts (for pictures see Bellwood 1987; for the Marquesas see Suggs 1963:139, 243; for Rapa see Hanson 1970:17; for Hawai’i see Malo 1951:118-20). Such variation in house types certainly influ-

7 G. Forster 1983:400; Le Maire 1945, I:52-3; Schouten 1945, I:178-80. Le Maire (1945, I:65) mentions women and children using canoes to reach his ship at Futuna. Mariner (1819:276-85) mentions several times that women accompanied the voyager Kau Moala.
enced boys’ instruction. In Samoa house building was the work of specialized carpenters who stood in high regard (Stair 1983:153-7). Apart from houses in which families lived, in most islands there were also large buildings, such as the meeting house, the chief’s house, or the men’s house. The difference in size between ‘normal’ houses and ‘status’ houses was often considerable, as appears for example from pictures of Tokelau (Huntsman and Hooper 1996:36, 145-6) and the Society Islands (Oliver 1974:162-76).

The opposite sex

At first sight the relations between boys and girls in Polynesia were without problems or restrictions. Some authors even suggest that the young were wholly free in their (sexual) relations. And there are certainly arguments for the existence of free love in the South Seas. The eagerness with which girls in Tahiti, Tonga, the Marquesas, and the Hawaiian Islands yielded to the embraces of foreign sailors have coloured this belief to a high degree. And, indeed, the behaviour of women and girls in these encounters as described by the sex-starved sailors – a condition one should not underestimate – was overwhelming. From the very first meeting between the men of the *Dolphin* in 1767 (in Tahiti), to the experiences of the French in 1791 (in the Marquesas Islands), the game was everywhere the same. Women and girls boarded the ships, and in exchange for a nail or some other trinket, the white men got a wonderful sexual experience. The voyagers’ journals describe in more or less explicit wordings the seamen’s delight in which all men aboard usually took part – with the notable exceptions of Captain Cook and Johann Reinhold Forster. Yet there are reasons to think that this happy picture does not reflect the whole reality.

In the first place these activities seem to be limited to the islands of eastern Polynesia. In western Polynesia, especially in the Samoa Islands, no such thing as free love was found to exist. There are no reports of excited sailors finding solace in the arms of Samoan girls. The virginity of Samoan girls, exemplified in the behaviour of the *taupou*, the village virgin, was an important asset in marriage negotiations, and such authors as Stair (1983:171) emphasize that ‘the family were the contracting parties, a union often proposed or arranged by the parents without any reference to the woman’s feelings’. It seems, however, that the missionaries of the London Missionary Society may have influenced the attitudes of the Samoans deeply. About the

---

pre-contact life of the Samoans not much is known, because European visits to the Samoa Islands before 1830, the year the missionary Williams landed, were rare and their journals contain hardly any data on the islanders. The report of the American explorer Wilkes (1852, I:176), who visited the Samoa Islands in 1838, explicitly points to the influence of the missionaries on the life of the Samoans, for they had succeeded in forbidding ‘many of their former evil practices’, such as wearing flowers in the hair, polygamy, and the ‘lascivious dances’ which at the time of his visit were still performed in the ‘heathen’ villages. These changes must have had profound repercussions on the education of the young.

In the second place the position of the girls ‘soon deteriorated and their merriness diminished, as on the one hand their activities developed into prostitution and they became exploited by their fathers, brothers, husbands, chiefs, and kings, and on the other hand they became infected with venereal diseases which turned them barren and made their lives very hard. This was their reward for giving pleasure to the sailors and birth to South Sea Romanticism’ (Claessen 1997:207).

In the third place not all girls participated gladly in the sex orgies. Bougainville’s description (1966:185-6) mentions that at least some of the girls were reluctant to show themselves naked to sailors, but were forced to do so by their male companions. It also seems that not every woman or girl partook in the orgies. The young lieutenant Caro, a member of Bougainville’s crew, remarked that the female members of the household of Ereti, the chief of the region, did not take part in it and that only unmarried girls were free to do as they pleased (Caro 1962:16; Fesche 1929:11). ‘The daughters of the notables were staked in another game: the gamble for high-status marriages and power’

---

9 Linnekin 1991. Roggeveen (1838:186-95) sailed along the coasts and only bartered incidentally. Bougainville (1966:237-40) did not stop at all, and only bartered with some men in canoes. La Pérouse (1995:386-414), however, made a stop at Tutuila, where he noted: ‘The women, some of whom were very pretty, offered with their fruit and poultry their favours to anyone who was prepared to give them beads’ (La Pérouse 1995:393). Some time later a dozen of his men were murdered while taking water. This murder made later sailors hastily pass the archipelago, as did Von Kotzebue (1830, I:209-14).

10 Wilkes 1852, I:196. The idea of a strictly chaste and puritanical society has for quite some time dominated the literature on Samoa. Linnekin (1991:16), however, referring to Krämer’s work Die Samoa Inseln from 1902, states that ‘Krämer’s assertion of sexual conservatism may be appropriate only for the post-Christian era’. Mead, who in 1928 presented a different non-puritanical picture, was attacked heavily on the ‘false’ impression she gave, recently by Freeman (1983), who left no stone unturned to demonstrate her incompetence. He is perhaps correct, but what to do then with the lascivious dances which Stair (1983:132-5) characterizes as a ‘saturnalia, of which a description is inadmissible here’? And what to do with La Pérouse’s statement about women trading themselves? Other cases La Pérouse (1995) mentions on pages 407, 419-20. And La Pérouse ‘is an honourable man’...
Henri J.M. Claessen

(1997:191; Fesche 1929:11). For the Tonga Islands similar statements are recorded. Wales, the astronomer on Cook’s second voyage, informs us that ‘the favours of Married Women are not to be purchased’, and that not all unmarried women admitted ‘familiarities, or at least are very careful to whom they grant them’ (Wales 1969:796-7). And, regarding the Marquesas Islands, Marchand’s 1791 journal contains intriguing statements on the difference between the encounters with the inhabitants of Tahua, and those of Uapou, where he anchored some days later. In the first island he was offered girls, and ‘les hommes m’y invitaient aussi en me faisant comprendre que je n’avais qu’à choisir celle qui me ferait le plus de plaisir’ (Marchand 2005:261). Clearly it was the local men’s wish that the French sailors entered into close contact with the women and girls. On the second island, Uapou, the meeting was perfectly peaceful, but reserved and polite. The women, completely dressed in tapa, kept their distance from the foreigners. However, ‘de respectables vieillards conduisant par la main de jeunes filles, venaient les leur présenter, comme le signe le plus assuré et le témoignage le plus sacré de l’hospitalité qu’ils nous accordaient’ (Marchand 2005:294-5) and the girls came trembling and shy – and Marchand wondered about the difference in conduct between the inhabitants of islands so near to each other. Time did not bring much change, however, for the Dutch traders Coertsen and Troost, who visited Nukuhiva in May 1825, report that Marquesan women visited their ships every night ‘and everybody had tremendous fun’ (Campus Broeze 1975:35).

There is reason to believe that most island boys and girls were familiar at an early age with the ins and outs of sex and eroticism, as they were living in the ‘populous and unpartitioned Maohi houses’ (Oliver 1974:352; Banks 1962, I:340-1; Stair 1983:109). They heard a lot and saw a lot, and especially in eastern Polynesia, adults were very open about sexual matters, and at a very early age boys and girls began exploring the opposite sex. These activities were encouraged by the adults, as observed by Cook during his first stay at Tahiti, where a young man ‘lay with a little Girl about 10 or 12 years of age publicly before several of our people and a number of the Natives’. He thought that it was done ‘more from Custom than Lewdness’, for there were a number of Tahitians present who, ‘far from showing the least disapprobation’, instructed the girl ‘how she should act her part’ (Cook 1968:93-4). Such behaviour is also described by Fesche, a midshipman on the Boudeuse, who relates in detail how he and some friends were invited into a Tahitian house, where the parents presented them their daughter of about 13 years of age for public love-making with the French sailors, in the company of about 30 Tahitians.11 Cook (1968:127) mentions very young girls dancing together ‘a

11 See Fesche (1929:4-6, 10) and Bougainville (1966:194-5, 216) for a similar happening.
very indecent dance’. In many respects Fesche’s and Cook’s observations resemble those of Marchand in the Marquesas Islands. Here too, very young girls, who had not even reached the age of puberty, eagerly had sex with men and boys (Marchand 2005:280; Von Krusenstern 1985:61). This behaviour was perhaps connected with the existence here of ‘secondary husbands’, or pekio. This refers to the custom where men who were unable to hire others to work for them gave labourers as a reward free access to their wives, who had to be rather accomplished lovers to keep the pekio satisfied enough to continue working for their husbands. Only girls with sufficient competence in the realm of sex could aspire to marrying a notable. However, such a custom did not exist in Tahiti. Oliver (1974:350) only comments that Tahitians regarded sex ‘as one of the most pleasurable of all activities’, so boys and girls learned to deal with sex from early childhood.

And what to think of the situation in the Hawaiian Islands, of which Sahlins (1985:10) says:

Children, at least of the elite, were socialized in the arts of love. Girls were taught the ‘amo amo’ the ‘wink wink’ of the vulva, and the other techniques that make ‘the tights rejoice’. Young chiefs were sexually initiated by older women, preparing them thus for the sexual conquests that singularly mark a political career: the capture of a senior ancestry. And, all this, of course, was celebrated not only in the flesh, but in dance, poetry, and songs.

In many respects Sahlins’s words echo the views of the Europeans who visited the Hawaiian Islands in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One may wonder, however, to what extent these educational practices were also found among the commoners, or far from the coast, where peasants lived and worked the extensive taro fields (Ladefoget et al. 2001, 2008).

Interestingly, Mariner, who lived in the Tonga Islands several years, and knew from experience the situation there very well, states ‘dass die Bewohner dieser Insel mehr ein keusches, als ein zügelloser Volk sind, und dass sie in dieser Hinsicht gar nicht mit den Bewohnern der Sandwich- und Gesellschafts-Inseln zu vergleichen sind’ (Mariner 1819:461). This statement

12 Cook was not the only one to observe indecent dances. In 1792 Captain Bligh saw young women dancing, shedding all their clothes, and later young men danced a ‘performance more indecent than any I had before seen’ (Bligh 1952:90; also p. 63).

13 On the pekio see Thomas 1990:79-82, who notes the power women could get in this way; Robarts 1974:269-71; Thomsson 1980:26; Danielsson 1960:28; Melville 1959:239-40 (Melville seems not completely to have understood the secondary husband system). Compare also the remarks of Suggs (1963:118) on the sexual education of little girls.

is a bit surprising in view of the many reports by European visitors on the sexual activities of Tongan women and girls, starting with the early experiences of Schouten and Le Maire (Schouten 1945:73, 198), and later those of the members of Cook’s expeditions (Cook 1969:268, 444; Clerke 1969:758; Wales 1969:796-7; Samwell 1967:1015, 1033). Georg Forster (1983:400), on the same voyage, considered the activities of the Tongan girls no different from those of the Tahitian ones. And the surgeon Anderson remarks that sex was a subject of great interest to the Tongans, and states:

[…] they rather seem to think it unnatural to suppress an appetite originally implanted in them perhaps for the same purposes as hunger and thirst, and consequently make it often a topic of public conversation, or what is more indecent in our judgement, have been seen to cool the ardour of their mutual inclinations before the eyes of many spectators.15

Yet, though the foregoing might suggest an almost complete freedom for (young) Polynesians with regard to the opposite sex, the situation was not so simple. As mentioned above, married women generally did not partake in the orgies of welcome for European visitors – though in later years many of them were sent by their husbands to obtain nails, hatchets and the like in exchange for sexual favours (Claessen 1997:192; Wales 1969:769-977; Turnbull 1806:384). The abstinence of elite women seems to have been carefully maintained – though there are a few cases known in which noble women offered their favours (Caro 1962; Samwell 1967:142; Fesche 1929:11).

There were, however, other constraints on contact with the opposite sex. These were based upon the complex kinship rules that decided which young persons were and were not allowed to have contact with each other. Such rules not only prescribed suitable sexual and marriage partners, but also specified which relatives were to avoid each other completely and which were allowed to speak to each other. The extent of such prescriptions varied by island and according to the social standing of those involved, but everywhere such rules existed – and were carefully inculcated in the minds of the young as a serious part of their education. In the Tonga Islands and the Samoa Islands, for example, there were strong rules of avoidance between brother and sister (Gifford 1929:21-2, 26; Douaire-Marsaudon 1998:57, 148; Mead 1968:271-2), the Tokelau Islands had a complicated system of kinship-based rules of avoidance (Huntsman and Hooper 1996:118-21), and in Rapa “brothers and “sisters” should never talk of sex, or both be present when the

15 Anderson 1967:945. Public intercourse was found in many islands. Schouten (1945:198) mentions it for the Tongan Islands as early as 1617; the experiences of the crew of Bougainville are referred to above; for Easter Island see Georg Forster 1983:493.
subject is mentioned’ (Hanson 1970:119). But such rules were hardly ever noticed by sailors, though they permeated social life in the islands.\textsuperscript{16}

It is sometimes pointed out that fathers tried to prevent their daughters having sexual adventures. Suggs (1963:117-21), for example, after remarking that Marquesan boys as well as girls were rather active sexually at an early age and continued these activities till they married, states: ‘When a couple is caught \textit{in flagrante} the uproar is frightening’. The enraged father sets out to punish the guilty young man, and threatens loudly to kill him and then turns to his wife and daughter, who both are severely beaten. It is not clear to what extent missionary influences induced the fatherly behaviour; neither is it clear whether such beatings took place in the eighteenth century, or whether it is a twentieth-century development. A lover in Rapa runs the same risk when he spends the night with his mistress in her house (Hanson 1970:117). Here too the question is whether this is a recent development or was already found in the eighteenth century.

\textbf{Specialists}

As everywhere else in the world, the Polynesian islands had specialists, persons having greater knowledge or skill than others. Such knowledge was not just the result of having been born with the gift, but was normally obtained in the course of long and often exacting training. This schooling can be considered a form of ‘higher’ education, and thus deserves to be included in this article. Some specialists, such as priests, navigators and tattoo masters, were easily identified by European visitors. The existence of others can be inferred only from the results of their work. This is the case, for example, for the conductors of beautiful and melodious choral singing, and for those who staged complex and impressive dances and ‘theatre shows’. In the following, attention will be given to the schooling of several types of specialists, as far as data are available.

\textbf{Stage masters}

Beaglehole, in his introduction to the journal of Cook’s first voyage (1968:clxxx-viii), says of the Tahitian Arioi society that its members were ‘highly skilled in mime and dance, with regular apprenticeship and grades of status’. And

\textsuperscript{16} In the Tonga Islands visitors noticed the status differences between brothers and sisters. Sisters had a higher status than brothers, as appeared in the behaviour of the \textit{tui tonga} towards his sisters (Bott 1981:17, 18, 32; Cook 1967:178; Wilson 1799:231, 265; Claessen 1988:438-41).
he adds that ‘Novices had to display their skill in dancing’, for the Arioi provided erotic dances and primitive drama that were a great diversion for the people, even though these activities were devoted primarily to the god Oro (on the Arioi, see De Bovis 1980:35-7; Oliver 1974:913-64; Claessen 1995). The performances were carefully directed by higher members of the Society, and Oliver (1974:921) mentions several times a ‘master of ceremonies’. Members who were inept, ‘who did not know how to dance and sing’, were punished and sent out of the theatre (Oliver 1974:923). Even assuming that many of the Arioi activities were more or less stereotyped and well known by Tahitians, they were apparently based on serious rehearsals and repetitions, staged by expert masters of ceremony. There were, in addition, numerous dances and plays performed during feasts, aside from the activities of the Arioi (J.R. Forster 1996:284-90). Don José Andia y Varella (1915:289) writes that ‘The King and great personages each keep one of these dancing masters to teach their families’. Don Blas de Barreda mentions in a letter (Andia y Varella 1915:472) that during some dances the participants ‘go quite nude and make movements of the most licentious character’ (see also Rodriguez 1995:83, 88).

Regarding the Tonga Islands, here too experts played a leading role in directing songs, dances and music. The lengthy descriptions given by Mariner (1819:534-45, 549-54) and Samwell (1967:1016-21) show that the songs and dances had been carefully rehearsed. They consisted of complex movements, in which groups of males or females varying in size came and went in turn, accompanied by songs and music. Each of the dances had a name, and was performed with great precision. The directing specialists here were not identified by Mariner or Samwell. H.G. Cummins (1977:85) mentions ‘the po me’e or night dance where the performers danced naked’ (some indications of this are in Mariner 1819:536; see also Le Maire 1945:71 on Futuna).

For the Samoa Islands the missionary Stair mentions several dances, noting that the poula or night dance has a lascivious character, and several ‘less objectionable’ dances, performed either by boys or girls (Stair 1983:132-6).

For the Hawaiian Islands numerous dances, songs, and rituals have been reported (Malo 1951:214-35). Most of the dances followed complex rules and demanded lengthy apprenticeships. Valeri (1985:39) states that instruction in the hula, which takes a long time to complete, begins and ends with sacrificial feasts, and each time the dance was performed, sacrifices were needed. Davenport (1969:5) mentions ‘masters of the dance’ (the hula) who had the court patronage that enabled them to assemble and train professional troupes. Regarding the hi’uwai rite, which was performed during the Makahiki Festival, Valeri states that ‘the sexual orgy that takes place during the hi’uwai rite corresponds to the union of the god Lono with the earth’. The feast continued for several days. And, as Valeri (1985:217) says, the erotic dances usually went from words to deeds, and the dancers ‘cannot refuse the
Learning and training

sexual advances of the spectators they have aroused’. Yet he (Valeri 1985:218) also says that ‘these marvellously coordinated dances provide the experience of a social action which seems to exist effortlessly and pleasurably at the junction between musical and corporal rhythms. In this feast also notables, and it is said, even the female alii took part and she had to obey the sexual rules as well as all other women.’17 Apart from this type of religiously coloured festivals and rituals, there were also many secular plays and games of which Malo gives a detailed survey. Some of these games had erotic connotations, such as the une, a kind of game – an ‘adulterous sport’, as Malo (1951:214) calls it – during which the game leader pointed to several men and women, who ‘went out and enjoyed themselves together’ (Malo 1951:214). The rules of the game are not made clear by Malo. In all cases mentioned, whether for religious rituals or secular games, there were ‘leaders’ who directed the procedures. In some cases such leaders were priests, in others lower alii, and sometimes it was just a person who knew the rules. The dances seems to have been learned during an apprenticeship, in which the apprentice followed the directions of older, experienced dancers.

Melville (1959:113) mentions the sacred ‘hoolah hoolah ground’ of Nukuhiva in the Marquesas Islands, which was forbidden for women. About the function of that ground he is silent. Elsewhere he describes girls dancing in the moonlight, and mentions that men never took part in these dances (Melville 1959:190-1). Melville also describes what he called the ‘Feast of the Calabashes’, during which large quantities of food were eaten, girls danced, young warriors showed up, and priests sung interminable songs. The leader of the feast was the local chief (Melville 1959:203-10; Robarts 1974:60). In his general discussion of feasts in the Marquesas Islands, Thomas states that they often had a political goal. It was a matter of prestige to outdo competitors by serving more and better food, and by attracting more guests. In this way such feasts played a large role in the ‘overall dynamic of Marquesan society’ (Thomas 1990:96). In several such happenings women were not allowed to partake, or to eat of the food; the tapu rules in this respect were strict. It was mainly chiefs who staged such feasts to show their position of power. In this game of status rivalry the organizer of a feast took every precaution to make it a success. So here it was well known who was the director or stage manager of the party. Additionally, Dening (1974:23) mentions the Kaioi, society, ‘whose members from puberty to marriage enjoyed considerable freedom of sexual experimentation and on whom the tribe depended during its feasts for dancing, entertainment and songs’. This however does not exclude the great

17 Valeri 1985:219, and note 58. After the end of the Makahiki Festival the alii are required to purify them in a complicated rite (Valeri 1985:220).
role of chiefs in organizing feasts (Dening 1974:25).

In trying to identify directors, conductors and other people who organized feasts or performances, it appears that their existence is based mainly on circumstantial evidence. Only in a few cases, as in the Marquesas Islands, can the organizer be identified, for here it was usually a chief who provided the feast. To what extent he was also the director or conductor is not clear, but this does not seem probable. Elsewhere, activities were directed by various people, priests, household heads, or leaders of the Arioi or the Ka’ioi. The actual choir conductors and choreographers remain anonymous. Their training remains unknown. Apprenticeship seems probable.

Priests

About the education of priests somewhat more is known. The discussion will be limited to those who are recognized as priests; temple assistants, servants, or sorcerers will be mentioned only in passing. Attention is given to the ranking of priests and the possibility of obtaining a higher rank. Though their ritual tasks and activities will be mentioned incidentally, the emphasis will be on how to become a priest.

In view of the many obligations of priests and chiefs, the combination of political and ritual tasks was often a heavy burden for sacred rulers. As priests were supposed to possess great religious and ritual knowledge, a thorough schooling was necessary. This aspect is emphasized by Oliver (2002:42-52) in his recent overview of traditional Polynesian culture.

As for Tahiti – and perhaps the Society Islands – detailed knowledge about education for the priesthood is available, it seems natural to start here. At the head of the priests of a certain marae stood the high priest or tahua rahī. In the great national marae, the high priest was usually a brother or son of the ari’i rahī. De Bovis (1980:46) suggests that the ruler who owned the temple delegated his religious and ritual tasks to a family member, as the combination of priestly and political tasks was too heavy. Apart from his priestly obligations the tahua rahī was also a close advisor to the ruler. The question remains

---

18 Where the sacred obligations became a burden for the ruler, political and sacral duties were separated. In Tahiti the ari’i rahī delegated his sacred duties (for the greatest part) to a high priest, and concentrated on the political aspects of his function. In the Tonga Islands the ruler concentrated perforce on his sacred status and delegated his political obligations to a hereditary prime minister (Claessen 1996:352-3; Claessen and Van Bakel 2006:230). A similar separation of sacred and political duties was found among the Incas and in early African states. Kirch and Green (2001:248) mention cases of chiefdoms where the chief combined his political and ritual obligations.
how and when the royal prince became versed in the necessary knowledge of religion and ritual, for candidates for the priesthood normally followed a lengthy and demanding schooling. They had to memorize the many prayers and rituals, and when performing them they had to be letter perfect, for ‘the slightest mistake or hesitation necessitated recommencement of the prayer or even abandonment of the whole ceremony’ (Oliver 1974:86; Henry 1951:162). To facilitate their learning, most of the instruction was in the form of songs, and covered a wide variety of subjects related to cosmogony, religion, ritual, and prayers. After finishing his first round of courses the candidate went to teachers elsewhere to complete his education. Finally he had to pass an exam in front of a number of *atahua*, who can safely be considered ‘professors’, and after passing, he was accepted into the priesthood as a new colleague and was allowed to conduct religious services (Henry 1951:161-3). His first service was a festive occasion, proudly organized by his parents. It should be noted that the function of priest was hereditary in noble families; candidates of the lower classes were hardly ever admitted to the schooling.

As detailed as the data are on priestly education in the Society Islands, so scanty are they on the situation in the Tonga Islands. This is strange, in view of the complex cosmogony of the Tongans. Mariner (1819:416-40) needed many pages merely to describe the many gods and spirits that were venerated, and priests needed to be well versed in this spiritual world. Nowhere, however, is found any mention of a formal schooling for priests. Their training was probably not as sophisticated as in the Society Islands and mostly transmitted within the family. I do not mean to say that religion was unimportant in the Tonga Islands. Campbell (1992:30) speaks of ‘an important practical matter for everyone’, and Koch (1955:246) says that ‘Indessen war das ganze Volk der Macht der Götter unterworfen’. Both authors point to the many temples and shrines all over the islands to which priests were attached, and emphasize that in many cases priests were possessed by a god or spirit and in that condition made known their wishes. According to Mariner (1819:443) such priests, when not possessed, had no special status (see also Koch 1955:247-8). Campbell distinguishes two types of priests, namely ‘mediums, whose bodies were taken over by a god and used to give a verbal message; and specialist priests, who were trained in religious knowledge and practice’. He adds that anybody could become a medium, but that specialists ‘came from the chiefly class and were hereditary within families’ (Campbell 1992:31). Gifford (1929), usually well informed, does not give much information. Several times he mentions temples and notes that a priest lived nearby. He also states that there was a tendency to heredity, which applied to priests as well as to priestesses (Gifford 1929:316-7). Ralston (1990:115) points to the fact that there were priestesses in Tonga, as well as female spirit mediums. She further refers to a training to become a formal priest, but neither she nor Paongo (1990) give
any details about such a training.

About the priests in the Marquesas Islands still less is known. Also here were found ‘real’ priests or *tuhuna*, and spirit mediums, or shamans, the *tau’a*. The term *tuhuna* was in use to indicate every specialist, some of which ‘were canoe builders, tattooers, stoneworkers and so on’. Within the *tuhuna* category the priests formed a special group.

They were experts in traditions and performed chants such as creation songs (*vanana* and *pu’e*), and were associated with certain deities, being the only ones allowed to eat food sacrificed to some *etua*. This position was reached usually through apprenticeship rather than succession, and all *tuhuna o’ono* were male. (Thomas 1990:34.)

In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the chiefs, and the *tuhuna* associated with them, gradually lost status and power to the *tau’a* and the *toa* (fighting men). Van Bakel (1989) and Kirch (1991) link this degradation to diminishing food production, which prevented chiefs from fulfilling their sacred obligation to ensure their people’s fertility, abundance and safety (Claessen and Van Bakel 2006:240).

Regarding the Hawaiian Islands Davenport (1969:4) states that priests fulfilled important roles. He considers a priest to be:

Anyone who by inheritance and training (and possibly by training alone) could practice any of the many magicoreligious rituals. The ritual practitioners were separated into higher and lower orders. The latter were little more than ritualists who were concerned with divining, sorcery and countersorcery, curing, and successful practice of crafts. The former were true priests who led and participated in rituals to the major gods of the Hawaiian pantheon. Those priests were divided into hereditary orders, each order serving one god. Many of the priests were full-time religious specialists. (Davenport 1969:71.)

The priestly activities were supervised by the *ali‘i nui*, the paramount chief. The most important priest was the *kahuna ali‘i*, the high priest. This functionary was responsible for most of the ruler’s religious duties, his temples, and his main gods (Valeri 1985:136). Many priests were also specialists in one or another profession. Some were builders of temples, fish ponds and homes; others read signs in the sky, and some were expert in the construction of canoes. Sometimes every specialist or craftsman was referred to with the title of *kahuna*. Interesting though all this may be, it does not tell us how a priest was trained. Perhaps the transmission of knowledge resembled the way Raymond Firth (1968:198) described it for Tikopia:

A possessor of knowledge normally expects to hand it on to his eldest son or grandson, or possibly, to his sister’s son; but there are few effective sanctions for this, and early death or lethargy are apt to intervene.
Finally, some attention will be given to the training received by navigators. Though nearly all Polynesians in the period under study were capable of steering a canoe for a short distance, most of them were just simple seafarers. Navigators were the professional seafarers. They had received a thorough training in the art of sailing and land-finding and were able to steer their canoes over long distances to far-away islands and return safely. This is not to say that their voyages always went smoothly. Here is the story of Kau (or Cow) Moala, a Tongan chief and member of a renowned navigator family (D’Arcy 2006:89), who left for the Fiji Islands to get sandalwood. He stayed there for two years, took part in some war, and then left for home. Near Vavau he was driven back by strong winds, ran for but missed Samoa, and eventually landed at Futuna, where he got a load of sandalwood. He then went westward to Rotuma, thence to Fiji, and finally returned to Tonga. Mariner mentions in passing that Kau Moala had a number of women aboard, who made the whole voyage with him.19 The trader Diapea, who lived in the Tonga Islands in the early nineteenth century, relates that long voyages, over a thousand miles and often taking two years, happened frequently (Diapea 1928:111-2). Though the ancient art of navigating got lost in Polynesia after modern methods were introduced, there are some regions in Micronesia where traditional knowledge was preserved (Lewis 1972:15-41). This was very fortunate when Ben Finney was looking for a traditional navigator to sail the experimental canoe Hokule’a from Hawai’i to Tahiti.20 The Carolinian navigator Piailug very competently brought Finney’s boat (which must have seemed very strange to him) to Tahiti in 32 sailing days, a distance of 5,400 km over unfamiliar seas. The Carolinians were experienced long-distance sailors, as is also apparent from reports by Arago (1823, II:8-23), who spent some time here in the early nineteenth century.

There are many indications that Polynesian navigators were once as competent as their Micronesian colleagues but their art got lost, and there is not much known about their schooling (Lewis 1972:38-9). Regarding Tahitian navigators, the Bounty mutineer James Morrison (1966:167) testifies that it:

> [...] peut paraître étrange à des navigateurs européens que ces gens soient capables de trouver leur chemin à de telles distances, sans l’aide de documents ou d’instruments, mais leur expérience et leur connaissance du mouvement des corps célestes, du lever et du coucher des étoiles est telle qu’un astronome européen se refuserait à le croire.

19 Mariner 1819:276-85. Compare Captain Heyen (1962:68), who analyses this voyage from the perspective of a modern sailor.
Similar praise can be found in Forster’s *Observations* (1996:303-18), where he tries to explain how the Tahitians could have gathered so much knowledge of stars and currents. He tells of the priest-navigator Tupaia, who accompanied Cook on his first voyage and showed an amazing knowledge of seas and islands.\(^{21}\) The Tahitian navigators were known as *tahata-orrero* (Lewis 1972:16, note 2). One of the main navigational techniques was steering by the stars. ‘The star path, the succession of rising or setting stars down which one steers, was known as the *avei’a* by the Tahitians’.\(^{22}\) Yet, though a lot has been written about sailing in Tahiti, there is hardly any indication how the sailors – or rather the navigators – got their schooling. Somehow they memorized the many constellations of stars, with the help of which they could set their course. That they were competent is mentioned several times, though Oliver (1974:194-219) emphasizes that the majority of Tahitian voyages were over relatively short distances, which diminishes their achievements a bit. On the other hand, he refers to several European visitors who had a high regard for their seamanship. One of them was the Spanish captain Andia y Varella, who refers in some detail to the navigation techniques they used (Andia y Varella 1915:285-6), while James Morrison (1966:168-70) describes boats and sailors in a positive way.

For the Tonga Islands there are descriptions of boats, instructions for good seamanship, and hints that local navigational knowledge was great (Dumont d’Urville 1832, IV:111-2). Here too remains the question of their schooling, of which little mention is made. For the Tonga Islands Lewis (1972:47) mentions the knowledge of star paths, known as the *kaveinga*.

Navigation knowledge in Tonga was restricted to a few navigator families. All were *eki* (chiefs) or *matapule* (ceremonial attendants) and carried hereditary titles. These families were known collectively as *toua* (D’Arcy 2006:89).

The navigators with their hereditary titles were members of the Tuita clan (Lewis 1972:37). Until far into the nineteenth century there was a lot of sailing in this region. This is not surprising, because the Tongan state consisted of a great number of islands. The missionary West (1865:48) mentions a visit to the northern islands by King George Tubou in 1850 with a fleet of 14 large canoes.

\(^{21}\) Tupaia was an *arii* and a priest from Raiatea, who became a high priest on Tahiti (Banks 1962, I:270). In the eyes of Banks, as well as of Cook, Tupaia was a most knowledgeable sailor, who knew many islands and their directions (Cook 1968:138, 291-3; Banks 1962, I:312, 317). A copy of his map is reproduced in Forster 1996:304-5.

\(^{22}\) Lewis 1972:47. The star path ‘is a succession of stars towards which the bow of the canoe is pointed. Each is used as a guide when it is low in the heaven; as it rises overhead it is discarded and the course is reset by the next one in the series. One after another these stars rise till dawn’ (Lewis 1972:47, 1977:31-7).
transporting more than 1,000 persons, and Mariner (1819:87-8, 99-100, 178-9) describes considerable war fleets. The Duff missionaries reported the presence of dozens of large canoes in Tongatapu shortly before 1800 (Wilson 1799:246). The voyages, even within the Tonga Islands, were not without risk, however. The unfortunate voyage of Kau Muala is described above, and several missionary reports mention accidents and shipwrecks during the nineteenth century.

The sailing and navigating abilities of the inhabitants of the Marquesas Islands do not get much praise from European visitors. Marchand (2005:281-2) considers their canoes sloppy and carelessly made. He adds that, their many deficiencies notwithstanding, they travelled with them over considerable distances. Robarts (1974:62, n. 23, 266-7) presents similar observations. J.R. Forster (1982:485) notes that the canoes ‘are thin, small & sowed together in a very slight manner’. Similarly negative comments about the canoes are made by Robarts (1974:62-3). Cook (1969:376, see also fig. 57) presents a short description of canoes without commenting on their quality.

The sailing and navigating abilities of the inhabitants of the Marquesas Islands do not get much praise from European visitors. Marchand (2005:281-2) considers their canoes sloppy and carelessly made. He adds that, their many deficiencies notwithstanding, they travelled with them over considerable distances. Robarts (1974:62, n. 23, 266-7) presents similar observations. J.R. Forster (1982:485) notes that the canoes ‘are thin, small & sowed together in a very slight manner’. Similarly negative comments about the canoes are made by Robarts (1974:62-3). Cook (1969:376, see also fig. 57) presents a short description of canoes without commenting on their quality.

The Hawaiian Islands, discovered by Cook in 1778, were inhabited as early as the fourth century AD (Kirch 1994:251). This early date suggests that the Hawaiian Islands were colonized from the Marquesas Islands (Lewis 1972:305; Claessen and Van Bakel 2006:236). A certain loss of navigational abilities since that time seems probable. From the first moment, each British ship was met with canoe loads of Hawaiians, willing to barter food and women (Cook 1967:483, 485, 486). Apart from the question of sailing abilities, the Hawaiian Islands were rather isolated from the remainder of Polynesia, for nowhere was the existence of this northern group mentioned to Cook or other voyagers. This situation might have been different in earlier centuries, for Tahitian seafarers may have reached Hawai‘i‘i in the twelfth century; Cachola-Abad, in a rather speculative article, suggests widespread contacts in former centuries with the whole of Polynesia. Be that as it may, seafaring at the end of the eighteenth century appears to have been limited to the Hawaiian chain. There is much written on Hawaiian canoes, the twin-hulled

---

23 See also Lawry 1851:61, 70.
24 See also Gifford 1929:205.
25 West 1865:64, 76, 271; Farmer 1855:219, 233; Lawry 1850:29, 1851:81.
as well as the single ones (Finney 1979; Lewis 1972), and generally the boats are judged to be good and easy to manage (Clerke 1967:1321). Great numbers of canoes often crowded around the English ships. Samwell (1967:1158) estimates that one day there were ‘150 large sailing canoes many of which contained thirty & forty men’. D’Arcy (2006:110) mentions war fleets of hundreds of canoes. Concerning navigators, Malo (1951:11, n. 7, 248, n. 2) mentions that in the past famous navigators conducted great voyages, guided by the stars.

About the schooling of navigators in Polynesia not much is known. It seems probable that their training resembled that on the Micronesian Islands, where it was a kind of apprenticeship. The aspirant navigator was coached and instructed by an experienced older navigator, a member of the same clan or family. The training consisted mainly of memorizing numerous star constellations, the role of sun and wind, and the location of islands and groups of islands. Navigators’ knowledge included numerous chants, rituals, and magic to calm the sea and to ward off storms, sharks, and other dangers. Great navigators were distinguished by their strength, wisdom, memory and courage (D’Arcy 2006:88).

Summary

The focus of this article is cultural transmission: the ways in which Polynesians instilled manners, customs, and knowledge of their society in children and adolescents. The education of boys and girls took place largely at home, in the family – though in actual practice the whole village added to the transmission of knowledge and the further polishing of the children. The fathers and other male kin took care of the boys, the mothers and other female kin educated the girls – while in both cases the children probably learned most of their practical behaviour from their playmates. About the transmission of material aspects a lot is known, as appears from Johann Reinhold Forster’s summary presented above. The transmission of religious, social and sexual knowledge, however, was not discussed by him. And yet these facts of life were of the greatest importance for the young. It seems probable that religious and social behaviour was learned at home. Sexual life was another matter. Though the basics of sex were gathered at home (in the small, crowded dwellings one could not avoid getting some knowledge of these matters), more detailed knowledge was acquired during meetings and explorations of the opposite sex for which, especially in eastern Polynesia, there was considerable freedom. Elsewhere there were more serious limitations in this respect, mainly related to class differences and various forms of brother-sister tapu. There are indications that in some islands parents actively encouraged the
acquiring of sexual experience. Children of chiefs sometimes got a separate education.

Apart from the general education of the young – the ‘primary school’ – the Polynesian islands also had several types of specialists, characterized by great knowledge and experience. Their training was a form of ‘higher education’ and reserved only for the happy few. To these specialists belonged the stage masters or conductors of singing, dances and feasts; the priests; and the navigators. It is strange that European visitors, who often referred to the great skills of the specialists, hardly ever paid attention to the ways in which they were schooled. The schooling of the stage masters is the least known. There are indications that they learned their art as apprentices of older, experienced masters of ceremonies. About the schooling of priests somewhat more is known, but the data about their training are mainly from Tahiti. Future priests had to memorize the many songs, rituals and traditions, and some proof of ability was required before a student was allowed to practise his vocation. In most cases priests were members of notable families. Only incidentally did women – in the Tonga Islands – serve as priestesses, but about their status and schooling not much is known. The navigators, finally, were greatly respected and highly renowned specialists. They too received a lengthy and thorough schooling, during which they had to memorize numerous star paths, chants, island locations, and the necessary magic to protect their voyages. About the training of navigators in Polynesia not much is known. This is perhaps connected with the fact that in Tahiti, as well as in the Marquesas and Hawaiian Islands, long-distance navigation was no longer practised at the end of the eighteenth century. Only for the Tonga Islands are there indications that sailors went out for long voyages until far into the nineteenth century. Our knowledge about the schooling of navigators is based mainly on data from Micronesia, assuming that their training was more or less similar to that in Polynesia.

At the end of the eighteenth century the traditional Polynesian cultures began to change greatly under the influence of missionaries, administrators and traders. South Sea Romanticism – as far as there are reasons to think such a phenomenon once existed – is found nowadays only in the prospectuses of travel agencies and in Hollywood films...

References

Alkire, William H.
Anderson, William
1967 ‘A journal of his voyage made in His Majesty’s sloop Resolution’, in: J.C. Beaglehole (ed.), The journals of Captain James Cook; The voyage of the
Andia y Varella, Don José

Arago, Jaques

Bakel, Martin A. van


Banks, Sir Joseph

Beaglehole, J.C.

Bellwood, Peter
1987 *The Polynesians; Prehistory of an island people*. London: Thames and Hudson. [Revised edition.]

Bligh, William

Bott, Elizabeth

1982 *Tongan society at the time of Captain Cook’s visits; Discussions with Her Majesty Queen Salote Tupou*. Wellington: Polynesian Society.

Bougainville, Louis-Antoine de

Bovis, Edmond de

Buck, Peter H. (Te Rangi Hiroa)
Cachola-Abad, C. Kehaunani

Campbell, I.C.

Campus Broeze, Frank

Caro, Lieutenant

Chamisso, Adelbert von

Claessen, Henri J.M.
2003 'Het verhaal van de reiziger'. Leiden: HOVO. [Printed lecture.]

Claessen, Henri J.M. and Martin A. van Bakel
Clerke, Charles


Cook, James


Cummins, H.G.

Danielsson, Bengt

D’Arcy, Paul
2006  *The people of the sea; Environment, identity, and history in Oceania.* Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press.

Davenport, William

Dening, G.M.


Diapea, William
1928  *Cannibal Jack; The true autobiography of a white man in the South Seas.* Introduction by H. de Vere Stacpole. London: Faber and Gwyer.
Douaire-Marsaudon, Françoise
1998  

Dumont d’Urville, J.S.C.
1832  

Farmer, Sarah
1855  
Tonga and the Friendly Islands; With a sketch of their mission history. London: Hamilton Adams.

Fesche, Charles F.P.
1929  

Forster, Georg
1982  

1996  
Observations made during a voyage round the world. Edited by N. Thomas, H. Guest, and M. Dettelbach. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press. [First published in 1778.]

Forster, Johann Reinhold
1983  
Reise um die Welt. Edited by G. Steiner. Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag. [First published in 1778-80.]

Freeman, Derek
1983  
Margaret Mead and Samoa; The making and unmaking of an anthropological myth. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Gifford, Edward W.
1929  

Goldman, Irving
1970  

Hanson, F. Allan
1970  
Rapan lifeways; Society and history on a Polynesian island. Boston: Little and Brown.

Henry, Teuira
1951  

Heyen, G.H.
1962  

Hoare, Michael E.
1982  
Henri J.M. Claessen

Huntsman, Judith and Antony Hooper
1996
Tokelau; A historical ethnography. Auckland: Auckland University Press.

Irwin, Geoffrey
1992

King, James
1967

Kirch, Patrick V.
1984

1991

1994
The wet and the dry; Irrigation and agricultural intensification in Polynesia. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kirch, Patrick V. and Roger C. Green
1987

2001
Hawaiki, ancestral Polynesia; An essay in historical anthropology. Cambridge: University Press.

Koch, Gerd
1955

Kommers, Jean
1998

Kooijman, Simon
1972

1977

Kotzebue, Otto von
1830

Kruisenstern, Adam Johann von
1985
Ladefoget, Thegn, Michael W. Graves and Mark D. McCoy

Ladefoget, Thegn and Michael W. Graves
2008 ‘Variable development of dryland agriculture in Hawai‘i; A fine-grained chronology from the Kohala field system, Hawai‘i Island’, *Current Anthropology* 49:771-802.

Lawry, Walter
1850 *Friendly and Feejee Islands; A missionary visit to various stations in the South Seas, in the year 1847*. Edited by the Rev. E. Hoole. London: The Missionary Society.

Lewis, David
1972 *We, the navigators; The ancient art of landfinding in the Pacific*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
1977 *From Maui to Cook; The discovery and settlement of the Pacific*. Sydney: Doubleday.

Linnekin, Jocelyn

Maire, Jacob le

Malo, David

Marchand, Étienne

Mariner, William

Mead, Margaret
Melville, Herman
1959  *Typee; A peep at Polynesian life during a four months residence in a valley of the Marquesas Islands.* London: Oxford University Press. [The World’s Classics.] [First published in 1846.]

Moerenhout, J.A.
1837  *Voyages aux îles du Grand Océan; Contenant des documents nouveaux sur la géographie physique et politique, la langue, la littérature, la religion, les moeurs, les usages et les coutumes de leurs habitants; et des considérations générales sur leur commerce, leur histoire et leur gouvernement, depuis le temps les plus reculés jusqu’à nos jours.* Paris: Bertrand. Two vols.

Morrison, James

Ogbu, John U.

Oliver, Douglas L.

Paongo, Kalapolii
1990  ‘The nature of education in pre-European to modern Tonga’, in: Phyllis Herda, Jennifer Terrell et al. (eds), *Tongan culture and history*, pp. 134-44. Canberra: Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History with assistance from Target Oceania.

Pérouse, Jean-François de Galaup de la

Ralston, Caroline
1990  ‘Gender relations in Tonga at the time of contact’, in: Phyllis Herda, and Jennifer Terrell et al. (eds), *Tongan culture and history*, pp. 110-17. Canberra: Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History with assistance from Target Oceania.

Robarts, Edward

Robertson, George
Learning and training

Rodriguez, Maximo
1995  

Ryan, Tom
2002  

Sahlins, Marshall D.
1958  
*Social stratification in Polynesia.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.
1985  

Samwell, David
1967  

Schouten, Willem Cornelisz.
1945  

Stafford, Charles
1996  

Stair, John B.
1983  
*Old Samoa or flotsam and jetsam from the Pacific Ocean.* Papakura: McMillan. [First published in 1897.]

Suggs, Robert C.
1963  
*The hidden worlds of Polynesia; The chronicle of an archaeological expedition to Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands.* London: Cresset.

Thomas, Nicholas
1990  
*Marquesan societies; Inequality and political transformation in eastern Polynesia.* Oxford: Clarendon.

Thomas, Nicholas, Harriet Guest and Michael Dettelbach (eds)
1996  
*Observations made during a voyage round the world by Johann Reinhold Forster.* Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.

Thomson, Robert
1980  

Tupouniua, Penisimani
1977  
*A Polynesian village; The process of change in the village of Hoi, Tonga.* Suva: South Pacific Social Science Association.
Turnbull, John

Valeri, Valerio
1985  *Kingship and sacrifice; Ritual and society in ancient Hawaii.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wales, William

West, Thomas

Wilson, James
1799  *A missionary voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, performed in the years 1796, 1797, 1798, in the Ship Duff.* London: Chapman.