

WEIRD PAPALAGI AND A FAKE SAMOAN CHIEF: A FOOTNOTE TO THE NOBLE SAVAGE MYTH

Gunter Senft

Max-Planck-Institut für Psycholinguistik, Nijmegen

Ihr aber lernet, wie man sieht statt stiert
Und handelt, statt zu reden noch und noch.
So was hätte einmal fast die Welt regiert!
Die Völker wurden seiner Herr, jedoch
Daß keiner uns zu früh da triumphiert -
Der Schoß ist fruchtbar noch, aus dem das krocht!

Bert Brecht (1967:1835)

INTRODUCTION*

The myth of the “noble savage” is as old as the first ethnographic reports on non-European cultures, and there is no doubt that it was made permanent by Bougainville’s description of the “noble savages” of Tahiti (Bougainville 1772; see also Bitterli 1991, Kohl 1986:19, and Senft 1995 and 1998). The myth certainly encompasses all non-European cultures. However, the ethnocentric European construction of overseas peoples’ representatives—imagined to be unspoilt by all negative aspects of European civilisation, by its rules, its regulations, its powers, its repressions, and last but not least by its moral standards—seems to be most popular when it deals with peoples from the South Seas. These days we are easily tempted to look at the “noble savage” myth as being a past phenomenon. Yet as I have illustrated elsewhere (Senft 1995, 1998) this is not at all the case. Whenever Europeans feel or realise, now and again, the “discontents of civilisation” (to use Sigmund Freud’s famous phrase), they seem to find relief in old, new, or revived noble savage myths. In what follows I will report on such a case of a revived noble savage myth in Germany.

ERICH SCHEURMANN’S *DER PAPALAGI*

In 1920 Erich Scheurmann published a booklet titled *Der Papalagi—Die Reden des Südseehäuptlings Tuiavii aus Tiavea*¹ (*The Papalagi—The Speeches of the South Seas Chief Tuiavii from Tiavea*²). In his introduction to these speeches Scheurmann claims that he translated manuscripts of Tuiavii from Samoan into German. Scheurmann also claims that he met the chief in Tuiavii’s village Tiavea on Upolu Island which belongs to the Samoan group. He

describes the Samoan as a friendly giant with a female voice and a favourable mood. Though at first sight Tuiavii is said to be a rather typical native, Scheurmann emphasises that Tuiavii has to be regarded as exceptional with respect to other Samoans because of his "awareness . . . the inner power which distinguishes [Europeans] first and foremost from all primitive peoples" (" . . . Bewußtheit . . . jene Innenkraft, die uns [Europäer] in erster Linie von allen primitiven Völkern scheidet," p. 14). It is here that Scheurmann first reveals his rather ethnocentric point of view biased by much racist prejudice. Scheurmann reports that Tuiavii, a former pupil at a Marist school and a Catholic Christian, had visited all European countries as a member of a "Völkerschaugruppe" or native performance group³ and thus became familiar with, and gained some insight into, European cultures (pp. 14f.). After returning from Europe, Tuiavii is said to have written drafts of speeches which he intended as a kind of "native missionary activity" (p. 15). This was meant to be a manifesto for his Polynesian contemporaries, admonishing them to guard themselves against European influence, which—with its destructive "demonic" traits—endangers their Polynesian "innocence" (p. 13). Scheurmann claims that he had obtained Tuiavii's permission to translate these drafts "as literally as possible" (p. 16), though he also states in the first sentences of his introduction that Tuiavii did not intend to publish these speeches for a European readership and that Scheurmann published his translations against Tuiavii's will and without the chief's knowledge (p. 13). Scheurmann justifies the publication of his translation of Tuiavii's speeches with the fact that these speeches are of value for "us who are white and enlightened" ("uns Weiße und Aufgeklärte," p. 13) because they show us "how the eyes of someone who is still close to nature see us and our culture. With his eyes we experience ourselves" (" . . . wie die Augen eines noch eng an die Natur gebundenen uns und unsere Kultur betrachten. Mit seinen Augen erfahren wir uns selbst . . .", p. 13). Scheurmann concedes that these speeches may sound childish and sometimes silly to the European ear, but he emphasises that it is this naiveté, this innocence, sincerity, and openness that may help us to find a way "retour à la nature."

In his introduction Scheurmann does not give any information why and how long he stayed in Samoa and how good his knowledge of the Samoan language really is. In later editions of the book we also

look in vain for any such information. In Hans Ritz's⁴ polemic against Scheurmann (Ritz 1983:117-48) we learn—among other things—that Scheurmann, an art student and follower of the German “Wandervogel” movement,⁵ travelled to the then German colony and arrived in Samoa in June 1914 (Ritz 1983:121). In August he was made a prisoner of war and interned by New Zealanders, and in autumn of 1915 he was allowed to leave Samoa for North America. Thus, Scheurmann had only a few months to live in Samoa and to learn the language. To acquire a language during such a relatively short sojourn in Samoa requires either an extreme giftedness for unguided language acquisition or a strong motivation guided by a knowledge of linguistics that exceeds that of the average linguistic layman. For this reason, this first confrontation of Scheurmann's claims with the basic facts makes it rather unlikely that he really was the translator of Tuiavii's speeches—and one of the first, and very negative, reviews of *Der Papalagi* expresses much scepticism with respect to this pretension (Franck 1921). Scheurmann himself may have felt the need for some confirmation of his claim. In his photo collection of pictures from Samoa, published in 1927, Scheurmann therefore captioned photo 85, showing a Samoan couple in front of their house close to a small outrigger canoe, with “Chief Tuiavii from Tiavea with his wife” (“Der Häuptling Tuiavii aus Tiavea mit seiner Frau”). However, as Ritz (1983:122ff.) rightly observes, the man depicted in this photo hardly fits Scheurmann's description of Tuiavii in his booklet. It is quite funny to see how later editions of *Der Papalagi* tried to keep up the fiction of the claimed Samoan authenticity of the speech-drafts published by Scheurmann. An unauthorised “pirate” copy of *Der Papalagi* published by students in Marburg in 1971 shows a typical Polynesian chief (reprinted in Ritz 1983:125) who matches Scheurmann's description of Tuiavii much better than the photo in Scheurmann's 1927 book. These rather naive attempts to keep up with the fictive Samoan authorship are hardly understandable, since any expert on Samoan culture and language could easily unmask Scheurmann's (pseudo-)literary camouflage. In his excellent ethnological-philological analysis of the booklet, German ethnologist Horst Cain (1975) accomplished this sharply and convincingly. (Unfortunately, Cain's “bourgeois” criticism remains faithful to the original and seems to ignore the ideological aspects

transmitted with the *Der Papalagi*). As Cain already indicates in the title of his contribution, Scheurmann's *Der Papalagi* attempts to join the literary tradition that had started in 1721 with Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*. The basic idea of Montesquieu's book, and many other publications that followed his example, is that the author publishes letters, diaries, travelogues, or reports of more or less exotic foreigners who describe aspects of European culture and civilisation from their own, exotic, or, if you like, ethnocentric point of view.⁶ The claim of the actual authors of such publications—that they are only editors and translators of the presented material—serves as the poetic licence protecting them from sanctions for their published criticism; that is, they are only the distributors of ideas and thoughts of exotic, sometimes funny and sometimes cunning and witty, foreigners. The fact that Scheurmann, his publishers, and his disciples did not want to give up the Samoan authenticity claim may indicate that they feared a comparison between *Der Papalagi* and the *Lettres persanes*—probably because of literary quality criteria. Moreover, given the fact that Samoans had their first contact with European missionaries of the London Mission Society as early as 1830, every informed reader must wonder why the chief thinks it necessary to describe to his Samoan audience “the *papalagi*”—the whites, the Europeans—and their clothing and other habits, their houses, their money, and their animals and pets in a rather clumsy and, moreover, highly “un-Samoan” way (Cain 1975:618). I will not discuss this aspect of Scheurmann's booklet in more detail. In what follows I will give a brief summary of *Der Papalagi*'s speeches (with many references to Cain's expert philological criticism).

The booklet presents eleven speeches with programmatic titles. All follow the same principle: A certain aspect of European culture and behaviour is first described and explained with European—and thus emic—arguments. Then the described and explained facts of European life are evaluated from the Samoan—the etic—point of view. Finally, this evaluation results in an admonition to the orator's fellow Samoans to remain as Polynesian as possible if they want to avoid the presented mistakes of the Europeans.

The first speech deals with “the *papalagi*'s way to cover his flesh, his many loincloths and mats” (“Vom Fleischbedecken des Papalagi, seinen vielen Lendentüchern und Matten,” p. 19). This speech serves as a criticism of European morals. However, it is full of sexist clichés

and based on a strange mixture of, on the one hand, Sebastian Kneipp's, Vinzenz Priebnitz's, and Arnold Rikli's ideas of how to lead a healthy life (p. 24), and of, on the other, the ideology perpetuated by the "nudist culture" movement ("Freikörperkultur FKK") that became popular in Germany at the end of the 19th century (Köhler 1985).⁷ I will not discuss the silly and clumsy circumscriptions Scheurmann uses to let Tuiavii describe the Europeans' clothes. Horst Cain has shown how stupid, "un-Samoan", and completely off the point it is to describe shoes as a kind of canoe, to give just one example (Cain 1985:619-20). I want to point out, however, that it is interesting to compare this speech in *Der Papalagi* with Scheurmann's introduction to his 1927 "Samoa" book. In the speech the chief complains that Europeans dislike Samoans' facial contours and especially noses (p. 28). In 1927 Scheurmann confirms this ethnocentric judgment—criticised by Tuiavii-Scheurmann in 1920—with respect to the aesthetics of bodily beauty, now emphasising that a Samoan's "... nose ... and mouth are fleshy and thick" (Scheurmann: 1927:10).⁸ Moreover, because of the ideological bias of the arguments perpetuated in the *Der Papalagi*, Scheurmann criticises the "white skin" of European females and their fear of, and protection against, the sun. He contrasts them with Samoan virgins who expose their naked body to the sun—without any feelings of sin and shame (p. 28f.). Scheurmann himself must be aware of the fact that he is not referring to the highly estimated Samoan village virgin because, as he describes in his 1927 book, she also protects her body from the sun to look whiter than the other girls in her village and to achieve the title of a *sina*, a "white" woman (Scheurmann 1927:20). However, to report the whole story in this speech would spoil one of the self-proclaimed social reformer's main arguments in favour of nudist culture and nudism in Europe: which is first and foremost seen as a means to protect young European males from too many erotic phantasies because they have access to the "naked" facts in the nudists' camps. Without these "negative erotic phantasies" (and this is the gist of Scheurmann's argument here) young European men would be more useful to their society (p. 28f.).

Tuiavii-Scheurmann deals in the second speech with the Europeans' houses ("stony cabinets"), their streets ("stony clefts"), cities and villages ("stony islands": "Von den steinernen Truhen, den Steinspalten, den steinernen Inseln und was dazwischen ist"). The

house the "orator" describes is certainly the house of a rich European (who could afford to have his son travelling to Samoa, for example). The majority of Europeans in those days did not live in houses with separate kitchens, dining rooms, smoking rooms, and bathrooms (Brüggemeier 1986 and Stenbock-Fermor 1931). Further, the life of European farmers that Tuiavii-Scheurmann contrasts with the life in European cities was not as healthy and beautiful as he has it (see, for example, Wimschneider 1984). Cain has emphasised the silliness of Tuiavii-Scheurmann's pseudo-primitive descriptions and circumscriptions of cities, bathrooms with hot and cold water ("water with and without sun": "besonntes und unbesonntes Wasser," p. 35), and things like telephones which were long known to Samoans (Cain 1975:620-1). However, Cain did not point out that Tuiavii-Scheurmann's comparison of a bell with "the nipple of a woman that has to be pressed till she cries" (p. 34) can only be understood as a kind of Freudian slip that offers some insight into this speechwriter's own sexual phantasies.

The topic of the third speech is money: "the round metal and the heavy paper" ("vom runden Metall und schwerem Papier"). Cain (1975:621) points out that money was known to the Samoans in Scheurmann's time and that we find the expression *tupe* for 'money' already in Pratt's 1862 dictionary. However, Cain does not mention that Tuiavii-Scheurmann denounces missionaries as liars bribed by rich Europeans to not tell the Samoans that the European Christians' real God was money (p. 43).⁹ Moreover, in this speech Tuiavii-Scheurmann also mentions the discrepancy between the wealthy and poor classes and describes some of the ugly phenomena of capitalism. Yet, as we shall see below, Scheurmann's social criticism of capitalism develops into a kind of mystified social sermon that tries to reconstitute "real" Christian ethics.

Tuiavii-Scheurmann continues this social criticism, stating that "the many things make the *papalagi* poor" ("Die vielen Dinge machen den Papalagi arm"). It can be read as a warning against the accumulation of personal belongings and wealth, because this inevitably will lead to a reproduction of the Europeans' capitalistic society. It is interesting that Tuiavii-Scheurmann interprets capitalism as a force that fosters the development of material culture, and that he contrasts this capitalistic culture with the nature and naturalness of Samoan life (p. 55). It is here again that Tuiavii-Scheurmann quite

explicitly refers his speeches back to Rousseau's maxim "retour à la nature."

In his next speech the "orator" points out that "the *papalagi* does not have time" ("Der Papalagi hat keine Zeit"). Besides being a criticism of the Europeans' concept of time, this speech also finds fault with the Europeans' diet. Here Scheurmann probably makes his most obvious mistake—though he knew better (Scheurmann 1927:15). He claims that a Samoan would criticise the Europeans' "love to put the liquid of killed fruit [probably wine] and the meat of pig and ox into his belly" ("er liebt es, viel Flüssigkeiten von getöteter Frucht und Fleisch von Schwein und Rind in seinen Bauch zu tun," p. 63). Cain (1975:622) emphasises that Samoans would never have used this pseudo-primitive phrase to refer to eating. He points out that they, like all Polynesians, simply love to eat and quotes Marsack (1964:178-9) who states that "the most important feature of any Samoan meal has been its bulk."

Tuiavii-Scheurmann then continues his admonishing speeches, stating that "the *papalagi* made God poor" ("Der Papalagi hat Gott arm gemacht"). With this rather cryptic heading Tuiavii-Scheurmann presents his discussion of what he claims to be the different concepts of personal belongings in Europe and on Samoa. Scheurmann claims that there are no possessive pronouns in Samoan that make the same distinctions as the possessive pronouns in German. He denies the existence of the concept of "personal belongings" in Samoa. And he claims that the Samoan language does not have a word referring to the concept "to steal." This speech is so full of obvious errors that even an anthropological layman with some basic information on Pacific cultures cannot but detect at least some of them. I refer the interested reader once again to Cain's detailed and devastating criticism of Scheurmann's booklet, its inconsistencies, illogical arguments, and its obvious ignorance with respect to Samoan language and culture. This speech ends with another cryptic warning not to believe the *papalagi's* claim that "nothing belongs to God": as a kind of reformatory missionary Tuiavii-Scheurmann does not only denounce again the white missionaries as heretics and liars (as in the third speech), he also wants to perpetuate the idea that "everything belongs to God" and that therefore it is God who distributes everything among peoples like the Samoans (pp. 75-6). The alleged—but, as Cain so clearly reveals, completely incorrect—concept that everything

belongs to everybody in Samoa is said to simply not allow for any forms of class struggle and class distinctions. However, the concept that is said to be valid for the Samoans becomes lost as soon as people like the *papalagi* think that they are more important or wiser than God. Thus—and this seems to be the quintessence of Tuiavii-Scheurmann's argument—Tuiavii's fellow Polynesians should better beware of the cunning *papalagi*'s lies.

This argument is perpetuated in the next speech, in which Tuiavii-Scheurmann claims that "the great spirit is stronger than the machine". After his general discussion of human vices in the previous speeches, Tuiavii-Scheurmann now presents himself as a critic of "the machine"—his *pars pro toto* term for technical development. Though the speech expresses some admiration for this development, we again hear that God is still more important and even stronger than all machines and all inventions made by the "*papalagi* who wants to play God" (p. 84):

Another aspect of European culture is criticised in the speech on "the *papalagi*'s profession and how he gets lost in it" ("Vom Berufe des Papalagi und wie er sich darin verirrt"). Again it reads like a kind of social criticism that denounces professional specialisation as "alienated work." However, instead of a socio-cultural analysis in the vein of the theory where this term was coined, Tuiavii-Scheurmann simply contrasts the situation of workers in capitalistic Europe with the work of Samoans living in their village. That such a comparison is completely invalid because it does not take into account the differences of historical, technico-material development between Europe and Samoa should be obvious to anyone. Moreover, it is again the "great spirit" who is said to abhor the idea of Samoans working like European workers. One just wonders why this "great spirit" does not care for the *papalagi*. Or is Tuiavii-Scheurmann so stupid or so cynical that he may hold European workers themselves responsible for their general situation and living conditions at the beginning of the twentieth century?

Tuiavii-Scheurmann's comments on "places of the wrong life" ("Von dem Orte des falschen Lebens") seems to justify such a negative reading. Here the "orator" denounces the media—cinema, newspapers, books—as a safety-valve system that allows for various forms of escapism from the negative aspects of European life.¹⁰ Moreover, he refers to the dangers of being well informed (p. 100):

the European's need for information does not distinguish between good and bad news, though bad news should better remain unknown (simply because it is bad news). Also, newspapers may use this need for information to indoctrinate their readers. This speech presents such a negative picture of Europeans that a critical reader may wonder why Tuiavii-Scheurmann is afraid of them and the negative aspects of their culture. The *papalagi* is said to be so stupid that "he takes a picture of the moon as the moon itself, and a mat full of writing [i.e., a book] as life itself" (p. 101).

However, contradicting this conclusion, the tenth speech discusses the *papalagi*'s "severe disease of thinking" ("Die schwere Krankheit des Denkens"). Tuiavii-Scheurmann accuses Europeans to "think so much that thinking becomes habitual" (p. 105). Europeans are "prisoners of their thoughts" (p. 106). They do not realise that persons who think "age faster and become ugly" (p. 107) and that only "persons who do not think much but find their way in life anyway are the truly wise" (p. 109). Even "the great spirit" is said "to dislike human curiosity" (p. 109). Books and education are denounced as causing this severe disease of thinking (pp. 110-11) and the *papalagi* themselves prove that this disease diminishes the value of every human being ("Der Papalagi beweist uns durch sich selbst, dass das Denken eine schwere Krankheit ist und den Wert eines Menschen um vieles kleiner macht," p. 111). This speech conveys a hostility against any form of education and scientific knowledge which is difficult to understand. Moreover, it also denounces the Samoans as "noble savages" who, as "innocent children of nature," do not—or will not (or cannot?)—think like Europeans. However, because, according to Tuiavii-Scheurmann, Samoans do not think all the time and are not as influenced by other thoughts as are Europeans who read so many books, the Polynesians are said to think more reasonably and more naturally than the *papalagi* (p. 110). All this sounds terribly contradictory, illogical, and racist.

The booklet ends with Tuiavii-Scheurmann's warning that "the *papalagi* wants to drag us into his darkness" ("Der Papalagi will uns in seine Dunkelheit hineinziehen"). This last speech begins with a praise of *papalagi* for their activities as missionaries enlightening the Samoans with Christianity. It especially praises the *papalagi* for having eliminated warfare in the Samoan Islands (p. 114)—wholly neglecting incidents like those described and published by Stevenson

(1892). The discrepancy between this praise and what was said earlier about missionaries is even evident to Tuiavii-Scheurmann, since he almost immediately modifies this picture of the *papalagi* as a person who is "holding the light with outstretched hands to give light to others, though he himself and his body remains standing in the dark and his heart is far away from God, although his mouth calls God, because he is holding the light in his hands" (p. 115).¹¹ Tuiavii-Scheurmann's audience should be careful, then, not to be dragged into the *papalagi*'s darkness, into his hate, his rage, and his war. They should refrain from the *papalagi*'s "pleasures and lusts, his hoarding of wealth . . . his greed to be more than his brother, his senseless actions, his curious thinking and his knowledge that does not know anything. Rather, they should become or remain true Christians, because it is only God who gives them noble and beautiful happiness" (p. 118). This happiness results in love. And all they need is love . . .

In this fashion the speeches lead their immediate audience—and their readers—into a renewed Christian community of social noble savages full of love on an island in the South Seas. This is pure escapism. It offers a mystic and mystified earthly paradise deeply rooted in the ideals of Christianity, but it does not give any political perspective whatsoever. Moreover, as Ritz (1983:136) already noted, it implies that the blessings of Christianity in the end justify the colonisation of Samoa, with all its implications and destructive consequences for Samoan culture and tradition so clearly described and criticised in Stevenson's *Footnote to History*. However, on the surface, the speeches pretend simply to criticise this colonisation, colonialism in general, and European colonialists in particular. We will return to this topic in the two following sections which deal with the author Scheurmann, with the editorial history of *Der Papalagi*, and with the history of work's reception.

... to be continued in 9(2)



WEIRD PAPALAGI AND A FAKE SAMOAN CHIEF: A FOOTNOTE TO THE NOBLE SAVAGE MYTH

Gunter Senft

Max-Planck-Institut für Psycholinguistik, Nijmegen

(... Conclusion)

A FOOTNOTE TO ERNST SCHEURMANN

The interested reader of *Der Papalagi* looks in vain for any information on Erich Scheurmann. Once I had collected bits and pieces about this author I thought this oversight might not have been wholly unintentional. After his remarkably uncritical summary of *Der Papalagi*, Winfried Weißhaupt (1979:2(2):479) presents a brief biographical note on Scheurmann. There we learn that the author lived from 1878 to 1957 and that he was a painter and writer who published a number of essays and novels, of which some of the "telling" titles are mentioned. In Engelhard and Mesenhöller (1995:134) we learn that Scheurmann was actually Swiss, and in Ritz (1983:138ff.) we read that Scheurmann was a party member of Hitler's NSDAP; that he wrote poems to celebrate "The Führer's" birthday; and that he propagandised for Nazi ideology. Scheurmann had no difficulties trading in his impertinent Christianity which is so obviously documented in *Der Papalagi* with its "blood and soil" (German "Blut und Boden") ideology. He easily managed to mix South Seas romance with Nazi-"Aryan" racism.

That this is not an unfair attack is documented by Ritz (1983:140ff) who, among other things, refers the reader to some of Scheurmann's publications. Ritz presents a few quotes from Scheurmann's novel *Zweierlei Blut* (*Two Kinds of Blood*), published in 1936. (Excerpts from this novel can be found in Stein 1984c:211-25.) In what follows I wish to illustrate Scheurmann's ideology with a few quotes from this novel. Scheurmann's protagonist Georg is a young man visiting Samoa. He is characterised as a man who "does not yet know anything about the ties of blood and race" and who is "charmed by the thought of sharing his life" with a native woman, "one of these beautiful and strange growths of the tropics" (Stein 1984c:211).¹³ Georg fails to have a relationship with a girl of high status and prestige, but he marries a young girl whose mother knows Germany and even speaks German because she had been a member of

one of the "performance groups" visiting Europe. Her daughter, a fourteen-year-old girl, is of "pure Polynesian blood" (Stein 1984c:217). Scheurmann enjoys describing her "young breasts" as "high-curved, firm", and "like a bowl" (p. 223) or like "ripe fruits" (p. 220).¹⁴ He also enjoys describing the beauty of other naked or half-naked Samoan girls (see, for example, p. 214). Like these other girls, Georg's bride resembles "an animal of the bush that does not know anything about itself" (p. 214) but who at the same time has much "respect for the white blood" (p. 218). This "marriage of two species-alien worlds" ("artfremde Welten," p. 220) finally fails because Georg realises in the end that he is a member of the white race. That is, he becomes aware of the fact that there is "a sense and a depth in every blood-community" and that his marriage "was a sin against the sense in Creation, against all laws of blood and species" (Ritz 1983:142-3).¹⁵ In this novel, there abound terms and concepts like "blood", "voice of the blood," "rhythm of the blood," "nobility of the blood" (German "Blutadel"), "race," "alien to the species" ("artfremd"), "co-specific" ("artgleich"), "soil-bound" ("erdhaft"), and so forth. This vocabulary—together with the trashy kitsch found in the "erotic passages"¹⁶ of this novel, revealing the author's own awkward and inhibited sexuality—are typical for the ideology of fascism. (Compare, for example, the documents in Hofer 1957.) It is in this way that Scheurmann, with this publication, exposes himself as a representative of Nazi "blood and soil" ideology and as an agent of the fascists' race delusion.

Given this fact it is no wonder, then, that in his 1927 book on Samoa Scheurmann bewails that the islands are no longer German property. He hopes that what he calls the entry—not the admission—of Germany into the League of Nations offers the chance of regaining the "mandate" over Samoa. In utter misappreciation of all historic facts he states that Germany, with its passionate interest for Samoa, did not act as an exploitative colonial power but helped raise Samoan values.¹⁷ The statement entirely contradicts the impression Scheurmann wishes to give in his *Der Papalagi* speeches. However, the author stretched the truth elsewhere, as well. He does not award credit to the—mostly Anglo-Saxon—photographers of the pictures he presents in his 1927 book (Engelhard and Mesenhöller 1995:134). A closer look at the history of how various editions of *Der Papalagi*

were received by its readers also reveals that Tuiavii-Schuermann's speeches—the focus of our attention here—actually constitute a case of plagiarism.

HANS PAASCHE'S *LUKANGA MUKARA* AND
ERICH SCHEURMANN'S *DER PAPALAGI*:
ORIGINAL AND FAKE

In 1912-13, Hans Paasche published nine letters of the African "Lukanga Mukara" who in his journal "Der Vortrupp" reports on his "research trip into inner Germany."¹⁸ Soon the letters were also available in book form. For the third edition of *Lukanga Mukara* in 1986, editor Helmut Donat asked Iring Fetscher to write an epilogue. In this epilogue the German sociologist Fetscher points out the striking parallels between Paasche's *Lukanga Mukara* and Scheurmann's *Der Papalagi*. Scheurmann obviously not only took over the idea and structure of Paasche's book written in the Montesquieu tradition: he also discussed almost all the topics that were criticised in the first six letters of *Lukanga Mukara*'s "research report." In *Der Papalagi* we find the same criticism of clothing, money, working conditions, social inequality with all the differences between the rich and the poor, life in polluted cities, and so forth just as in Paasche's *Lukanga Mukara*. However, these two books differ not only with respect to literary style and quality, but also, and especially, with respect to the quality of their expressed social criticism. Paasche, a former lieutenant and colonial marine officer, as a result of his World War One experiences became a pacifist and radical democrat. Conrad (1989) points out that during Berlin's November Revolution in 1918 Paasche became even a board member of the Berlin Workers' and Soldiers' Council ("Mitglied im Vollzugsrat der Berliner Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte"). With his *Lukanga Mukara* Paasche wanted to describe the ugly aspects of capitalism in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century and to propose solutions to overcome the power mechanisms responsible for the structure of this pronounced feudal-capitalistic class society. Ritz (1983:131) emphasises that whereas Paasche used the exotic alienation to unravel the social alienation and to show ways of how to overcome it politically, Scheurmann used in his "remake" of Paasche the same exotic alienation for a mystification of the political situation

of social inequality which can only be overcome by a strange kind of return to the inner values of mankind. Ritz (1983:132) concludes his devastating criticism of *Der Papalagi* with Lessing's dictum that "the book contains new things and good things, but the good things are not new and the new things are not good." In his epilogue to the 1986 and 1988 editions of Paasche's book, Iring Fetscher¹⁹ explicitly states that Scheurmann plagiarised Paasche's *Lukanga Mukara*. Fetscher (1988:2 and 124) classifies *Der Papalagi* as a clumsy case of plagiarism that changed an African into a chief from the South Seas and that plays down Paasche's social criticism. According to Fetscher, though Paasche knew of *Der Papalagi* he generously refrained from suing Scheurmann for plagiarism. However, Tanner and Staehlin, publishers of later editions of *Der Papalagi*, sued the publishing houses Donat and Goldmann; successful in their suit, Tanner and Staehlin had Donat and Goldmann erase Fetscher's reproach in the brief overview on the book on page two and on the back of the cover. In addition, the court interdicted Goldmann to advertise Paasche's book as "the real *Papalagi*" ("Der Ur-Papalagi") on the front cover of its edition (Kühnert 1989). But Paasche was not only robbed and blundered by a fascist—an offence almost sanctioned by the fact that this truth is still of no interest to a German court. In 1920, the pacifist Paasche was accused of hiding weapons for communists. His farm in the Neumark was searched by soldiers of the right-wing volunteer corps ("Freikorps") called "Brigade Ehrhardt" (Conrad 1989) and Paasche was shot and killed. The volunteer corps did not find any weapons, of course. Paasche's murder was officially excused as an accident, a coincidence of unfortunate circumstances ("ein Zusammentreffen . . . unglücklicher Umstände"). It was never investigated nor prosecuted (Fetscher 1988:117).²⁰

Given all these facts it is difficult to understand how a book like *Der Papalagi*—criticised soon after its publication as "amusing" for its first five pages, then "boring", and finally "silly" (Franck 1921:73)—enjoyed a circulation of 27,000 copies in 1928 (Ritz 1983:144). It is almost incredible that, by 1992, circulation of *Der Papalagi* had reached one million copies. *Der Papalagi*, first a "cult book" among alternative circles, had become a real bestseller. In what follows I will now attempt to analyse why *Der Papalagi* had such a favourable reception and try to find an explanation for the remarkable history of Scheurmann's booklet.

WEIRD PAPALAGI AND A FAKE SAMOAN CHIEF

This paper bears the subtitle "A Footnote to the Noble Savage Myth," and I think it is exactly here that any explanation for the favourable reception of *Der Papalagi* by its (predominately German) readers has to start. I have pointed out elsewhere (Senft 1995:480-1 and 1998) that contact between European and non-European cultures overseas "has been characterized from the very beginning by the conviction of dominant superiority and supremacy of the Europeans with respect to the representatives of the overseas cultures." It is quite evident the Europeans' conviction greatly disadvantaged any attempts to understand these overseas cultures. However, we note that with the first ethnographic reports on these overseas cultures we find the picture of the "noble savage" emerging—that was made permanent, as mentioned above—by the travelogues of Cook (1784) and Bougainville (1772). Now the "civilised" European was not forced to deal with "savages" only; there were "noble savages" as well. "... and this other, this new 'ethnocentric' construction by overseas peoples' representatives allowed Europeans feeling somewhat uncomfortable within their own culture to project their ideals and wishes, their longings and hopes onto these 'noble savages' and their 'exotic' cultures that were assumed to be 'unspoilt' (so far) by all negative aspects of European civilization" (Senft: 1995:481 and 1998).

A possibility to project wishes of an intact world to Samoa and the "unspoilt" Samoan Tuiavii is exactly what Scheurmann offers the readers of his *Der Papalagi*. The booklet serves as a kind of timeless valve for the political and social frustrations its readers' experience in their European society. Its social criticism is mild to people of every creed and kind, it does not hurt anyone, and it pretends to be politically neutral in its plea for returning to the good inner values of mankind (whatever these values may be).

I just emphasised that such forms of escapism are welcome especially in times of political frustration. And Germany of the 1920s, with all the political and economic problems of the Weimar Republic, offered such frustrations in abundance. Thus, if we accept this argument, it is understandable that *Der Papalagi* became a kind of bestseller after its publication, particularly if we keep in mind that political ideas of the right-wing and fascist ideology became more and more popular.

But why do we find this kind of "renaissance" of *Der Papalagi* in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s? Cain (1975:617) has pointed out that the first unauthorised "pirate" copy of *Der Papalagi* was printed by students in Marburg in 1971. I have already mentioned further editions of the booklet from 1973 (note 2), and in 1977 Tanner and Staehlin started publishing their—by now many—editions of *Der Papalagi*. In his epilogue to these editions by Tanner and Staehlin, Bert Diel explicitly states that, "the present time asks for exotic things" ("Exotisch ist gefragt," p. 122). He renews the claim that the speeches are part of an "exotic reality," and praises the speeches in *Der Papalagi* for their "humanity, love, and simplicity." According to Diel, the speeches help the reader to better understand social and political problems and to get a better relationship with countries of the so-called "third world." This naive evaluation is interesting for our purposes: namely, to understand why *Der Papalagi* met with such a favourable reception in the 1970s and 1980s. But before I elaborate on this, I have to note one other thing. In this very epilogue, Diel subclassifies the world population of 2,000 million people into 500 million human beings and 1,500 million natives.²¹ This differentiation is revealing. Suddenly the naive evaluation quoted above shows itself in a new (a somewhat brownish?) light. Following this telling epilogue is a text by Maxine van Eerd-Schenk, illustrator of Tanner and Staehlin's editions of *Der Papalagi*, who praises the "amusing" booklet with its "comic metaphors" for its "dream to be able to go back" ("Der Traum vom Zurückkönnen," p. 125), again a plea for pure escapism. What had happened in Germany to allow this ideology to fall (and still be falling) on fertile soil?

By 1971 the student political movement, which had highlighted in 1968, had passed its climax. Alternatives for political activity became evident: either "the long march through the (political) institutions" or blunt criminal political terror in the succession of Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof's "Red Army Fraction—RAF," which, by the way, started with escapist, ahistoric, and somewhat socio-romantic ideas of fighting a city-guerilla war à la South America in Germany (Baumann 1979 and Aust 1985). Both alternatives were not too promising, particularly after all the elan, *engagement*, and enthusiasm of the late 1960s.

1977 saw the publication of *Der Papalagi* with Tanner and Staehlin. However, it was also the year in which Baader and

Meinhof's RAF kidnapped and killed Hans Martin Schleyer, president of the German Employers Association (Aust 1985). It was a year in which many students and other persons had to deal with the dangers, or the realities, of the "Berufsverbot" or blacklisting (Beutin *et al.* n.d.). The last years of the 1970s certainly marked the end of the late 60s' political atmosphere of departure for a better future society. Moreover, the job situation started to get bad, even for students with a good university qualification. The rise of German economic development, the German "Wirtschaftswunder", had reached—if not already passed—its climax. Thus, there were many reasons for escapist thoughts of all kinds. The student movement deteriorated into the so-called "Sponti" (spontaneous people) movement, with groups that referred to themselves as "city-Indians" ("Stadt-Indianer"), a clear sign for another kind of escapism, and with the "punk" movement as another of its many outcomes. Moreover, it was also the time of the "Jesus-people" movement during which many young people also tried to find a better way of life with foreign religions and gurus like the Bhagwan. The ideas, the ideals, the historical awareness, the political and social visions, and the abstract theory of the generation of the late 1960s were more and more superseded by spontaneous and egocentrically oriented attempts by individuals to find alternative ways of living. The "Muesli"-generation was slowly taking over and escapism was a possible way out of all frustrations for both the younger and older generation. Tanner and Staehlin had cleverly understood the symptoms of these times. It seems that Germany, with its "alternative scene" and with the rise of the first, then still rather naive, supporters of the "green environmentalist" movement, was once more ready for *Der Papalagi*.

With this general change of attitudes we also find a change in perceiving literature and art. In the late 1960s students of literature started to look at the historical conditions in which writers had lived and written. They were eager to detect "bourgeois" ideology in the literature of the 19th and especially 20th centuries. And they were extremely critical with respect to literary products that gave the slightest hint of transporting fascist ideas. However, the mid-70s saw a change in the paradigm of literary sciences—the text itself came back into the focus of attention—and Cain's otherwise excellent review of Scheurmann's *Der Papalagi* is a good example for this kind of new, or should I say traditional, approach to literature. Cain simply

cannot cope with Franck's devastating criticism of Scheurmann's book and in the end classifies *Der Papalagi* as satire because he obviously had not learnt to probe a bit deeper and to look at the historical conditions in which the author of this text had lived and worked. (I hope that this paper has shown the dangers of such an approach.) Even otherwise critical writers like Fohrbeck and Wiesand (1983:24-5) and ethnologist Fritz Kramer (1977:55) encountered no problems with Scheurmann's Tuiavii, and in 1982 *Der Papalagi* achieved inclusion among the reading material for pupils in German high schools (Herrmann 1990 and Ritz 1983:128).

The one million copies of Scheurmann's *Der Papalagi* seem to verify the saying that the world wants to be deceived. However, I hope that papers and reviews like the ones published by Ritz and Cain—and, perhaps, this one, too—will help to make people more aware of such traps as that of the Noble Savage Myth lurking in pamphlets like *Der Papalagi*.²² It is high time that we are willing to learn more about the life and culture of other ethnic groups, countries, and nations. And we should always be aware of the fact that any form of idealisation of the so-called "primitive native living an unspoiled life" is just another form of European colonialism and colonisation.²³ It is still necessary to be critical with respect to all forms of ideology.

I would like to finish this paper with a rather personal statement, from the point of view of my own personal experiences as an anthropological linguist conducting field research on the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea. Publications like *Der Papalagi* defame the people we, as linguists and anthropologists, are working with. As stated elsewhere (Senft 1995:505 and 1998), I am convinced that it is part of our professional ethics to counteract positively whenever we see the image of the people we are studying, living, and working with discoloured by tabloid treatment.

NOTES

*After I presented my paper on "Noble Savages and the Islands of Love" (Senft 1995 and 1998) at the Basel Conference of the European Society for Oceanists in December 1994, I had a rather long discussion with Australian sociologist and Pacific expert Grant McCall on the subject. Grant asked me about German literature that purports and perpetuates the noble savage myth, and I mentioned to him Scheurmann's *Der Papalagi* which he had never heard of. The more I told him about the author, the book, its background, its editorial history, as well as the history of readers' reactions to it,

Grant asked me whether I would not like to write this up and present it at his session "Colonialisms Cultures" at the XIth Pacific History Association Conference at the University of Hawai'i, Hilo, in July 1996. For this reason, I wish to thank Grant for giving me the impetus to write a paper I would otherwise not have written. Moreover, I also thank him for personally reading a first draft of this paper for me at this conference which I could not attend because of conflicting conference schedules.

1. Scheurmann's booklet was translated into many European languages and distributed almost everywhere in Western Europe. However, I do not have any data on readers' reactions to this book in countries outside Germany, and therefore I will deal only with the German history of the book and German readers' reactions to it.
2. All translations of German quotes from *Der Papalagi* into English are mine. In this paper I refer to, and quote from, the third edition of Scheurmann's booklet published by Tanner and Stachlin in 1978. Besides this edition, the original edition of 1920 to which I refer in the list of references, and the "pirate" copy published in Marburg in 1971 (Cain 1975:617), there are two further editions published in 1973: one in Berlin by a publisher named Bär, the other in Hamburg in a series called "Luta-Leben. Indianer heute" with "Release" given as the name of the publisher (Weißhaupt 1979:2(2):478).
3. In connection with European and American colonialism these "Völkerschauen" were quite popular both in Europe and America. In 1874 Carl Hagenbeck exhibited a Laplander family together with some of their reindeer at his zoo in Hamburg. The first presentation of representatives of Samoan people was in 1889. These shows were organised by Robert A. Cunningham, an agent of the Barnum Circus, and 22 female and 4 male Samoans were presented in cities like New York, Copenhagen, St. Petersburg, Brussels, and Cologne. In Germany, five "Samoans-shows" ("Samoaner-Schauen") were organised by Carl and Fritz Marquardt between 1896 and 1911. The last "Völkerschau" was organised again by Carl Hagenbeck with New Caledonians in his zoo in Hamburg. See Mesenhöller:1989; Engelhard and Mesenhöller 1995:143-4; Goldmann:1985a and b; Heidemann:1995; and Jebens 1989.
4. Hans Ritz is the pen name of Ulrich Erckenbrecht (Kühnert 1989:89). Erckenbrecht studied sociology with Iring Fetscher. We will hit upon Erckenbrecht's professor Fetscher again when we discuss the editorial history of *Der Papalagi*.
5. The "Wandervogel" was an organisation for adolescents founded in 1901 by Karl Fischer in Steglitz, a suburb of Berlin. The organisation was a kind of "alternative movement" that favoured trekking, natural ways of living, holiday camps for the young, singing of traditional folk songs, and dancing of traditional folk dances. The "Wandervogel" was the start of the so-called German youth movement ("Jugendbewegung"). As an aside, its songbook *Der Zupfgeigenhansl*, edited by Hans Breuer in 1908, is still in print in Germany.
6. For an overview about this literary tradition, see Weißhaupt (1979). For a more recent book that follows the example provided by Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, see Rosendorfer (1983). For a true-life account of a Chinaman who visited France from 1722 to 1725, see Spence (1988).

7. The ideology of the nudist movement was first voiced by Heinrich Pudor in his publication *Nackende Menschen—Jauchzende Zukunft* in London in 1893. Members of this movement are presently organised in the "International Naturists' Federation INF/FNI" which was founded in Montalivet, France, in 1953. For further proof that Scheurmann perpetuates the ideology of nudism, see the phrase "... im Lichte zu tanzen und sich vielfach ihrer Glieder zu freuen ..." ("... to dance in the light and to enjoy their limbs in many ways ...") in *Der Papalagi*, p. 59.
8. Scheurmann (1927:28) states in the original: "Die Gesichtsbildung beider Geschlechter ist nur teilweise schön. Die breitflügelige Nase und der aufgeworfene Mund sind fleischig und dick" ("The physiognomy of both sexes is only partly beautiful. The broad-flanked nose and the pouting mouth are fleshy and thick").
9. To quote the original: "... der Missionar ... hat uns belogen, betrogen, der Papalagi hat ihn bestochen, daß er uns täusche mit den Worten des großen Geistes. Denn das runde Metall und das schwere Papier, das sie Geld nennen, das ist die wahre Gottheit der Weißen" (p. 43).
10. For an excellent analysis of the role the media played in the development of a "wrong conscience" among German employees at the time of the Weimar Republic, see Kracauer 1929.
11. The original reads: "... er hält das Licht nur in ausgestreckter Hand, um anderen zu leuchten, er selber, sein Leib steht in der Finsternis, und sein Herz ist weit von Gott, obwohl sein Mund Gott ruft, weil er das Licht in Händen hält" (p. 115).
12. The original reads: "Bleibe von uns mit deinen Freuden und Lüsten, deinem wilden Rafften nach Reichtum in den Händen oder nach Reichtum in dem Kopfe, deiner Gier mehr zu sein als dein Bruder, deinem vielen sinnlosen Tun, dem wirren Machen deiner Hände, deinem neugierigen Denken und Wissen, das doch nichts weiß. ... Wir brauchen das alles nicht und begnügen uns mit den edlen und schönen Freuden, die Gott uns in großer Zahl gab" (p. 118). For expert criticism of Scheurmann's confusion of concepts like "spirit", "God", and *aitu*, I refer the reader once more to Cain (1975:624-5).
13. In the original: "Er weiß noch nichts von den Bindungen des Blutes und der Rasse. ... Er ist betört von dem Gedanken, sein Leben mit einer dieser schönen, seltsamen Tropengewächse zu teilen" (as quoted in Stein 1984c:211).
14. For Scheurmann's prepossession in favour of Samoan women's breasts, see also Scheurmann (1929) as quoted in Stein 1984a:266-7.
15. In the original: "... ist ihm ... der Sinn und die Tiefe aller Blutgemeinschaft bewußt geworden" and "Seine Ehe ... war eine Sünde wider den Sinn der Schöpfung, gegen alle Gesetze des Blutes und der Artung" (Ritz 1983:142 and 143).
16. Compare, for example, the following passage (as quoted in Stein 1984c:223-4): "Er sieht, wie sich ihre hochgewölbten festen und schalenartigen Brüste im Rhythmus der Atmung heben und senken. Seine Hände tasten nach ihrer Haarflut, er läßt sie behutsam durch seine Finger gleiten. Er ist völlig eingebannt in Betrachtung.
 "Solche Stunden sind ihm die schönsten. Sie kehren immer wieder, und er schöpft sie aus bis zur Neige. Dann genießt er die Geliebte, wie man die Erde genießt, ohne alle Ichsucht, geradeso wie man Blumen, Felsen oder das Meer betrachtet. Mit einer Liebe, die nichts von Lohn weiß, liebkost und umschaut er

das junge Weib. Sein Weib. Und es ist ihm Offenbarung, Bild und Gleichnis der Schöpfung, nicht anders als jedes Geschaffene, das sichtbar in der Zeit steht.

"Doch es gibt auch andere Stunden, in denen sich zwei wesensverschiedene Welten widerstehen. . . ."

17. Scheurmann (1927:32) wrote: "Von jeher haben die Deutschen ein geradezu leidenschaftliches Interesse für die Samoainseln bezeugt. Sie haben den Wert des Landes für sich zu heben gewußt, ohne Ausbeuter zu sein." It is true that Samoa had a special position as a kind of "semi-autonomous" colony (Hiery:1995). However, I refer the reader again to Stevenson (1892) to get a picture of the whole story.
18. These letters were first published as a book by Hähnel under the title *Die Forschungsreise des Afrikaners Lukanga Mukara ins innerste Deutschland, geschildert in Briefen Lukanga Mukaras an den König Ruoma von Kitara, gesammelt von Hans Paasche, herausgegeben auf Veranlassung Hans Paasches von Franziskus Hähnel* in the Fackelreiter Verlag, Hamburg.
19. In my personal copy of Paasche's book, which is the second edition of *Lukanga Mukara* as published by Goldmann in München in 1988, this epilogue is to be found on pp. 103-27. I will refer to it as Fetscher 1988.
20. Fetscher (1988:118-19) also quotes parts of the poem Kurt Tucholsky wrote as an epitaph for Hans Paasche. The poem can be found in Tucholsky 1960a:666-7. For further references to Paasche in Tucholsky's oeuvre, see Tucholsky 1960a:539, 658ff., 676-7, 682, 697, 700, 734-5, 802, 822, 995; and also 1960b:140, 565, 762.
21. In the original: "Vor ein paar Jahren zählte die Erde etwa zwei Milliarden Einwohner, das heißt fünfhundert Millionen Menschen und eine Milliarde fünfhundert Millionen Eingeborene" (Diel in Scheurmann 1978:123).
22. With respect to the general problem this paper discusses, see also Duerr (1987).
23. That this warning should be taken seriously is illustrated for example in Fischer (1984).

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Author's address: Prof Dr Gunter Senft, Max-Planck-Institut für Psycholinguistik, Postbus 310, NL-6500 AH, Nijmegen, Netherlands. gunter@mpi.nl.



BOOKS

Inia, Elizabeth K., Sofie Arntsen, Hans Schmidt, Jan Rensel, and Alan Howard, 1998. *A New Rotuman Dictionary. An English-Rotuman Wordlist and C. Maxwell Churchward's Rotuman-English Dictionary of 1940*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific. x + 363 pages, map. Price Fijian \$28 (paper). ISBN 982-02-0128-4.

Two works in one, *A New Rotuman Dictionary* is a useful addendum to Pacific language studies. About 2,500 Rotumans still live on 6 by 14-km Rotuma, 500 kms north of Fiji; a further 5,000 now call Fiji their home. Strictly speaking, Rotuma lies outside of "Polynesia proper"; its proto-language, from Central Pacific, was apparently a sister of Proto-Fijian and Proto-Polynesian. However, the island has played such a pivotal role in ancient Pacific migrations and back-migrations that its language speaks volumes about early Polynesian settlement—to those regrettably few linguists who care to listen. *A New Rotuman Dictionary* offers a new generation access to important data otherwise very difficult to obtain.

Pages 1-160 comprise the first published English-Rotuman wordlist (not a dictionary), based on C. M. Churchward's *Rotuman Grammar and Dictionary* (Sydney: Australasian Medical Publishing Co.) and the editors' own personal data. The wordlist parses individual entries whenever ambiguity makes this necessary. Pages 52-5, for example, include multiple entries involving "fish", presenting an impressive array of fish types indicated by their English, scientific (if possible), and Rotuman names (fish lists are capital indicators of Pacific lexicographical competence). All such English and scientific names are double-entered in the wordlist. It was prudent of the editors to deem this first part of the book a "wordlist", as it is primarily a finderlist to Churchward's full entries.

Pages 161-71 conveniently furnish addenda and corrigenda to Churchward. These contain additional glosses to Churchward and include