

Charles W. Kenn, Trans. *Moolelo of Ancient Hawaii*, Reverend John F. Pogue, Honolulu, Topgallant Press, 1978. Pp. xii, 245, appendix. \$5.95.

A major obstacle to understanding anything having to do with Hawaiian history and culture is that most of the major histories are written by non-speakers of the Hawaiian language. Thus, all of the major English-language histories or commentaries on Hawaii are based on the writings of basically four people: Samuel Kamakau, David Malo, John Papa Ii, and Abraham Fornander, Hawaiians who spoke English. But, much of Kamakau was unknown until parts of his writing were translated by Dr. Mary Kawena Pukui, in 1950. Much of Malo's work still remains to be translated, as is the case with some of the Ii and Fornander materials. The real need in Hawaiian studies presently is for Hawaiian translators who understand the metaphors of the Hawaiian language of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and who also have the historian's objectivity and research skills. Such a rare gem is Charles W. Kenn, who, in his seventies now, is just beginning to receive the credit and the recognition due him as a Hawaiian linguist and scholar. He has written prolifically on a number of Hawaiian subjects such as history, genealogy, sports, linguistics, music and even horticulture. In the Hawaiian community itself, Kenn is greatly admired and respected for his universal and academic perspective. He has labored long and largely unnoticed most of his life, although he is quoted often by scholars at the Bishop Museum, the Kamehameha Schools and the University of Hawaii. In 1980, he was a lecturer-in-residence at the

Brigham Young University-Hawaii Campus, conducting, among other things, a seminar in the Hawaiian psyche.

All of this introduction, of course, is designed to say as much about the man as about the book, because what Kenn has done with the *Moolelo* (story) is most important. There have been seven *Moolelo of Ancient Hawaii* beginning with the original text written entirely in Hawaiian by the students of Professor Dibble of the Lahainaluna Seminary in 1838. These young men, among whom was David Malo, were asked to interview their *kupuna* (elders) and ask them for as much information as possible on various aspects of Hawaiian culture. There were no restrictions as to the kinds of questions that could be asked, and as a result all editions of the *Moolelo* show the same basic sourcebook format. A wide range of topics is discussed ranging from the Creation of Hawaii and the generations of Wakea, all the way to telling time, seasons of the year, and points of the compass.

In this respect, Kenn's translation is most helpful because it tries to give a semantic translation relying on his feelings, *mana'o*, for the original Hawaiian language. One must remember that it was not until the late 1820s that Hawaiian became a written language, and that codification was still relatively new when the first *Moolelo* was written. Hence, the original style is somewhat stilted and formal, and reads more like a prayer book or a catechism. Kenn has tried to remain authentic by retaining the old format, and by inserting his more than three hundred corrections in brackets interspersed throughout the text. His corrections, translations, and explanations are all very helpful, particularly in bringing to light not only what early Hawaiian writers were saying, but also what they regarded as being worth sharing about their culture. Unfortunately much of what was thought was never written; much that was written was never translated; much that was written and translated was destroyed at the time of the overthrow of the monarchy; and much that was written, translated and not destroyed has still not made its way completely into print. Thus, Charles Kenn's translation of Pogue's *Moolelo of Ancient Hawaii* fills a very important gap in our understanding of Hawaii and Hawaiians of the early nineteenth century.

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