George W. Grace, ed., Special Issue, *Oceanic Linguistics: Essays in Honor of Samuel H. Elbert,* Albert J. Shütz and Emily Hawkins, eds. 15 (Summer-Winter 1976), University of Hawaii.

This special issue of the journal *Oceanic Linguistics* is two issues really, summer and winter of 1976, and is a *Festschrift,* a commemorative issue. In this case the one honored is Samuel H. Elbert, who is, as Jack Ward reminds us, ". . . one of the most prominent leading scholars of Hawaiian, Polynesian, and Central Oceanic Languages" (p. 8). Certainly the list of Professor Elbert's publications as given by Ward is impressive, ranging from scholarly works to popular articles to the ubiquitous *Pocket Hawaiian Dictionary* and encompassing some seventy-three titles.

The volume under consideration is not pure linguistic theory, as so many journals today (unfortunately) are, nor is it a journal which would be impossible for anyone but a linguist to read. It is in fact very good reading, and there are articles in it which would appeal to nearly everyone interested in the peoples of the Pacific. This broad current of subject matter is most welcome and though the theme is *linguistic* inquiry, it is so more in the sense of being an examination of language that almost any intelligent man can follow without needing to have access to an abstruse theoretical base.

Within this broad stream there seem to be four main divisions, or four different types of presentations. I make this distinction; it is not made in the journal. The first is literary, three poems in Hawaiian in honor of Professor Elbert: "*Mele Hahalo no* Samuel H. Albert," "*Nani Anuenue O Manoa,*" and "*Manoa.*" All three poems are also given in translation. The second division has only one offering in it--the bibliography of Samuel Elbert's works by Jack Ward which I alluded to earlier.

The third and fourth divisions of material are both linguistic inquiries, and I have classified them more on what I think a reader will need to have as background in order to understand and enjoy them than on any substantive differences between them. Though there are only six articles in these two divisions, they form the bulk of the issue.

The first of the linguistic divisions and the third natural division of the volume consists of essays philological. That is, they are investigations into the origins of words, and of the nature of movement of words from language to language. More importantly for the general student of Polynesian culture though, is the fact that these articles do not require a deep

understanding of linguistic theory to be appreciated. Four articles are in this division. They are Alfons L. Korn, "Some Notes on the Origin of Certain Hawaiian Shirts: Frock, Smock-Frock, Block, and *Palaka,*" William H. Wilson, "The o/a Distinction in Hawaiian Possessives," Paki Neves, "Some Problems with Orthography Encountered by the Reader of Old Hawaiian Texts," and Albert J. Schütz, "Take My Word for It: Missionary Influence on Borrowings in Hawaiian."

These four articles epitomize for me a certain very desirable type of scholarly writing: rigorous, yet readable by those outside the tight circle of the writer's own discipline. Korn's article, as an example, is a fascinating inquiry into the origins of the Hawaiian word *palaka,* and of the various garments associated with the name. Korn weaves history and informed speculation together with such adroitness that the whole piece becomes (to quote Korn describing someone else), ". . . so fraught with dense socio-historical overtones and lexical reverberations that it deserves a full hearing" (p. 24). For me this was one of the most enjoyable articles in the journal.

The last natural division of The *Oceanic Linguistics* volume has only two essays in it. They are George B. Milner, "Ergative and Passive in Basque and Polynesian," and Robert A. Blust, "Dempwolff's Reduplicated Monosyllables." These two essays require, I would think, some fairly sophisticated study in linguistics lurking in the background of the reader.

Consider Milner's article, for instance. As he himself states,

> Put into a nutshell, the argument turns on the question of whether the suffixes of Polynesian verbs . . . are associated with ergative constructions, or whether they have to do with voice, or more precisely, with active and passive constructions . . . , as was stated long ago by the nineteenth-century scholars of Polynesian languages and has recently been freshly argued by younger linguists using methods of TG grammar (p. 95).

That's quite a nutshell (one might ask, for instance, what the devil TG grammar is) unless one is more or less abreast of current linguistic trends. At least enough to follow the train of Milner's thought.

Actually, Milner's article is more than just a comparison of ergative and passive constructions. What he is really discussing, using the argument as a take-off point, is how possessing one language can interfere with our analysis of another language. It is possible, he argues, that a structure which looks like a passive and acts like a passive is in fact not a passive, but something different, and that an analysis of a language must

take into account the way the speakers of that language perceive the world and put those perceptions into words.

His discussion of Basque (not an IE language, by the way), suggests that the Basque verb ". . . does not have to be oriented first toward the participants" (p. 102). That is, the relationships between verbs and the participants are not merely syntactic, but presumably a mirror of the way things naturally are, and ambiguities seldom arise, not because of any linguistic markers, but because the speakers of the language live together and share a great deal of knowledge about those relationships. An affix is used on the participant noun only when that noun is not the most natural one to be in relationship to the verb of the sentence. As Milner puts it, ". . . an affix is resorted to when the active participant is not understood as having the most direct relationship with the predicate" (p. 103).

Milner then applies this analysis to Samoan and finds that it fits. He suggests that because in Samoan, as in Basque, the action of a sentence is not oriented toward the participants, the structures we translate as passives are more likely to be ergatives. Failure to recognize this, he notes, may be due to, ". . . our Indo-European linguistic prejudice" (p. 100).

For one willing to do the necessary homework, or one who has the necessary background this essay is rewarding. Without that knowledge (just what is an ergative?), the reader will have a difficult time of it, though there is much that is thought provoking in what Milner says, for beyond discussions of Basque and Samoan is the looming problem of linguistic ethnocentrism, Milner's real target.

In summation then. The special issue of *Oceanic Linguistics* is a subject matter wide enough to appeal to almost anyone interested in the Pacific, and varied in depth enough to interest the non-linguist as well as the diehard phoneme hunter.

Copies of this special issue are available for the regular subscription price of $8.00 (since this was one year's worth, it costs one year's subscription). Inquiries should be sent to *Oceanic Linguistics,* Department of Linguistics, 1890 East-West Road, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.

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