

Hovdhaugen, Even, *From the Land of Nafanua: Samoan Oral Texts in Transcription with Translation, Notes, and Vocabulary*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1987. Pp. 224, bibliography. \$55.00.

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During linguistic fieldwork in 1982-1983, Even Hovdhaugen recorded six stories (*tala*) and one genealogy (*gafa*) from two men in the Western Samoa village of Neiafu, Savai'i. These are presented here in both their original and normalized forms, the former being partly in the spoken (*k/g*) phonology, the latter entirely in the written (*t/n*) phonology. More than half the book consists of a vocabulary of the Samoan words found in the texts. The translations are accurate, though occasionally stilted, and the annotations comprehensive.

Publication of versions of Samoan oral tradition is nothing new--the

earliest occurred more than a century ago--but this present work differs in two major ways. Because the entire contents were collected at one location, the stories are particularly valuable source material for the study of variant forms and meanings of words, for such differentiation does occur on a geographical basis. The Samoan language is not an indivisible entity. Earlier publications (e.g., Milner 1961, 1966) have dealt with special regional uses or avoidances of individual words, but Hovdhaugen presents a useful body of material by which the nature and extent of such regionalization may begin to be assessed. To this end, the separate vocabulary section contains not only variants (in some instances, more than one) of words appearing in published dictionaries (Pratt 1911; Milner 1966), but also words absent from these earlier publications.

The second subject dealt with directly is the "to publish or not to publish" question with respect to Samoan *gafa*, an issue of more ethical than linguistic importance. The avidity with which Samoans greet published genealogies may be judged by the observation that, at an Auckland bookshop specializing in the Pacific, the Samoan book second in sales only to the Bible is the \$80 reprint of the first volume of Krämer's *Die Samoan-Inseln* (1902-1903), which contains selective versions of the genealogies of all major *matai* titles in both American and Western Samoa. The present *gafa* partakes of part of the one in Krämer (1902-1903:1, 241-243), which ends with the **Mālietoa** lineage, but appears to establish the importance of the Tau'ili'ili and **Sāmoeleōi** families in Neiafu itself. The recitation here begins atypically and ends prematurely. An issue of equal if not greater importance, however, is the decision to publish at all. With the approval of his informants "and many people in Neiafu" (p. 13), and despite the objections of "some Samoans" who "reacted quite strongly," Hovdhaugen decided to publish "to reward [the Neiafu people] for their openhearted hospitality" (ibid.).

Historico-legendary stories of the *tala* classification, as opposed to *fagogo* (fables), are ascribed a cultural importance far beyond their linguistic or narrative content. The localization of historico-legendary events within the narrators' or their village's lands is frequently done for purposes of self-aggrandizement, or as *pine fa'amau* (identification marks) supporting local claims to positions of political authority or social privilege, or for both reasons. To make such claims of knowledge is to make claims of power; to publish such stories may, in view of the authority with which the printed word is regarded, unwittingly elevate the status of those claims. And because audience expectations and per-

ceptions vary when listening to *fagogo*, Hovdhaugen's frequent citations of my own collection of these fables (Moyle 1981) in support of the "accuracy" of his recorded *tala* suggest a functional unity that does not exist. Neither the versions of the six stories presented in this volume nor any others published elsewhere are necessarily "authoritative," "true," or "correct" outside the locations where they were originally told. Indeed, it is the prerogative of each village to sustain its self-esteem by means of versions favorable to itself. In any dynamic society, cultural creativity and regeneration depend heavily on variation. But although the general outlines of the six stories (about Tigilauma'olo, **Nāfanua**, Papatea, Ti'iti'iatalaga, 'Alo'alolela, and Pava) are well known throughout Samoa, publication indiscriminately makes available details, particularly near the end of the narratives, which might well be denied to or modified for some sections of society--for example, rival claimants to positions of authority--were the stories to remain orally transmitted. At this point, the collector must look beyond the willingness of his informants and assess the likely impact of publication upon the wider public.

The publication of the *gafa* represents an acute case, as public disclosure among Samoans is usually confined to gatherings related to *matai*-title investitures at which the identity of those present is known. Many *gafa* are written in *matais'* notebooks and safely locked away, to be consulted in private when required. Within each *gafa* are crystallized the bases for the maintenance of the status quo and the justification for ownership of land and social privileges. Indiscriminate public disclosure leaves them vulnerable to manipulation by those with competing claims for the same material or social assets. Whatever interest Samoans may attach to their linguistic contents is far outweighed by their value as social treasures and as such, they exist to be guarded for use on special occasions.

I see the impact of this book as simultaneously positive and negative: positive for non-Samoans and for Samoans living outside their country, interested principally in the linguistic and narrative content; and potentially negative for Samoans who prefer to live their culture rather than read about it.

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