

John Charlot, *The Kamapua'a Literature: The Classical Traditions of the Hawaiian Pig God as a Body of Literature*. Monograph Series, no. 6. **Lā'ie**, Hawai'i: The Institute for Polynesian Studies, Brigham Young University-Hawai'i Campus, 1987. Pp. x, 165, index. US\$8.00 paper.

*Reviewed by Renate von Gizycki, Institut Für Völkerkunde, Göttingen University, Göttingen, West Germany*

In this monographic essay on the Kamapua'a literature John Charlot, theologian lecturing on Hawaiian and Polynesian literature and religious culture at the University of Hawai'i, presents a concise, yet comprehensive analysis of "The Classical Traditions of the Hawaiian Pig God as a Body of Literature." This book should be read and evaluated against the background of the author's earlier publications, all concerned with the understanding of Hawaiian culture and written in "the spirit of perceiving" --not just observing--its phenomena.

In this essay Charlot's primary focus is not on Kamapua'a, the ancient pig god unique to Hawai'i, as a powerful and destructive folk figure about whom many tales are told till today, but rather on the type of literature characteristic of Polynesian traditions in which a group of works is united by a common protagonist (such as the Samoan Pili, the Polynesian Maui, and the Hawaiian Pele). He concentrates on the question of stages of literary (logical) development, for him recognizable, and he wants to show how widespread older literary elements are utilized and collected into narrative complexes. Further, he discusses the redactional composition of such larger complexes, which reveal sequence of creation to him, reflecting in "stylistic changes--from archaic to modern--and in degrees of fixity and consistency of a given tradition" (p. 83). With carefully selected and documented material from published as well as personally communicated sources and oral traditions and stories, the author develops his arguments.

The earliest level of the Kamapua'a literature is based on traditional Hawaiian perception, and rural cults and practices related to pigs, many of these very ancient. Kamapua'a appears as a pig and a god, full

of personality and power, a typical folk hero--a loner, rebel, trickster, and women-chaser; he is "a shaper of the local landscape and shaped himself by the character of his land" (p. 3), an eccentric local god whose fame and influence spread from his place of origin at Kaliuwa'a to other regions. As he makes his way, he is first given a human *kino* (body), then is endowed with many bodies, which can be related to a human family, to the elements, to plants and animals.

Stories about this attractive folk hero multiply and are gathered into local collections; ritual practices are developed. Priests and chiefs, worried about his growing influence and power, attempt to assimilate him by applying literary motifs and genres of their own class to these stories and by emphasizing his human characteristics; eventually he is even given a genealogy that connects him with the family of a famous chief. The priests of the established cults of the traditional high gods finally place Kamapua'a into their theological framework, and in *The Kumulipo* creation chant he becomes integrated into "a total scheme of cosmic, human, and cultural development" (p. 4).

A dangerous and disruptive folk figure is thus brought under the control of the traditional social and religious authorities: "From a loner, Kamapua'a can be turned into an affectionate family man; from a rebel against chiefs, into a chief solicitous of his people's welfare; from a boisterous, mischievous god, into a powerful defender of the oppressed and an upholder of the forces of fertility" (p. 4).

For Charlot the Kamapua'a literature is "indeed a prime example of the mutual cultural influence exercised by the different classes of Hawaiian society on each other" (p. 4). This brief survey of the Kamapua'a literature, meant to be a "useful guide for the reader," naturally had to simplify different developmental stages; for example, some of them were practiced simultaneously. Furthermore, social classes could adopt or imitate each other's literature, combining characteristics of many levels of society, literary forms, and developmental stages. Kamapua'a texts provide indeed a fertile ground for social and cultural research on the Hawaiian Islands.

For his detailed, multilayered analysis Charlot refers to three pan-Hawaiian literary complexes in the Hawaiian language, composed by joining previously existing local literary units in a redactional framework: (1) *Ka'ao No Kamapua'a*, collected by Abraham Fornander (1860-1870); (2) *He Mo'olelo No Kamapua'a*, by G. W. Kahiolo (1861), recently (1978) republished and translated from a Hawaiian language newspaper by students of the Hawaiian Studies Program at the University of Hawai'i in a project under Charlot's guidance; and (3)

Ka Leo O Ka Lahui (1891), referred to as "Anonymous" and possibly dependent on Kahiolo.

Within these large complexes a number of differing views are expressed, on the level of smaller literary units as well as in chants and stories, or local complexes; preferences of the final redactors--rooted in temperament or ideology-- will certainly have further influenced the material they received and selected. For Charlot the effort involved in each redaction demonstrates the literary and religious value of Kamapua'a; it is therefore regrettable that so little is known about the redactors' biographies. There was no orthodoxy in Hawaiian thinking, but an appreciation and expression of "the richness and mysterious depth of their subject" (p. 5). Each hermeneutical reinterpretation thus reveals the actual importance of this figure for an understanding of the Hawaiian situation of today: "Kamapua'a touches those who study him in our own times of struggle. . . . In the words of **Kalahikiola** Nali'ielua: 'This text has *mana*' " (p. 85).

Specialists in the Hawaiian language may discuss in more detail the arguments used by Charlot in demonstrating the classical Kamapua'a literature to be "a body of works closely interrelated by such shared elements as specialized vocabulary, motifs, themes, characters, and smaller literary forms" (p. 83). For the scholar of Polynesian arts and literature, his structural analysis of stages of literary development offers valuable insight into the nature and dynamics of storytelling, and oral tradition in general; no single isolated story will any longer suffice as a source for far-reaching conclusions. "A study of such a body of literature is important for understanding the individual works within it, the process of its creation, its place within culture, and Polynesian thought in the broadest sense" (p. 1). Charlot shows how an intellectual development also corresponds to the literary one as the unruly pig god is increasingly made respectable. A need may have been felt to rationalize Hawaiian mythological traditions in the face of the new Western scientific theories --as the editors/translators of the Kahiolo text assume; a number of scholars have in more recent times theorized about this figure, and Hawaiian speculations "to make sense of Kamapua'a" seem to continue.

Charlot's monograph, although presenting his argument with ample evidence, is a concise and readable text; the specialist and the student will find all the necessary information and sources for research in the appendixes and notes, which make up the second half of the book (pp. 87-165), including a bibliography with an impressive list of Polynesian scholars, altogether a sound basis for further work on the subject.

Charlot's work, however, is by no means purely academic. In his

introduction he not only acknowledges the cooperation of his colleagues, among them Samuel H. Elbert, and the students in his courses, but thanks "all the members of the Hawaiian community who shared their knowledge with me, especially **Kalāhikiola Nāli'ielua**, John Ka'i-mikaua, Emma de Fries, and the guides for our classes at Kaliuwa'a" (p. ix), highly respected, learned Hawaiians and spiritual leaders. (He uses names whenever he has the permission to do so.) He is fully aware of the problems Western scholars experience in their attempt to understand Polynesian cultures, problems that he primarily attributes to our academic division of what to them is an organic unity.

Charlot's book on the Kamapua'a literature should itself be seen within a developmental context, forming a developing body of knowledge in Hawaiian religious and cultural studies and appreciation. He begins with methodological studies on "The Application of Form and Redaction Criticism to Hawaiian Literature" (*Journal of the Polynesian Society* 86 [December 1977]), also a basis for the study under review. The author, combining scholarly and artistic interest with sensitivity for contemporary discussions of Hawaiian awareness and worldview, then addresses a wider readership with his book *Chanting the Universe, Hawaiian Religious Culture* (Honolulu and Hong Kong, 1983). The value of chants and songs as sources of information for historical studies is demonstrated and exemplified in a monograph, *The Hawaiian Poetry of Religion and Politics* (**Lā'ie**, 1985), investigating "Some Religio-Political Concepts in Postcontact Literature," related to *aloha 'āina* (love for the land). The republication of *He Moololo No Kamapua'a* (collected by G. W. Kahiolo) by his former students apparently also belongs to this complex; within a new, more scholarly redactional framework the Kamapua'a literature has now reached an intellectual stage that--hopefully--(like for instance Pili in Samoan writing) will one day challenge modern creative writers (like Albert Wendt in Samoa). Within a novelistic work of synthesis, Kamapua'a--emerging from his underground existence-- may then experience a literary, political, and spiritual rebirth in many new forms and bodies, not only as a symbol but as a powerful protagonist of Hawaiian identity. "Hawaiian religious history is in as continual movement as the sea" (*Chanting the Universe*, p. 35).