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Even Hovdhaugen’s book demonstrates the value of collecting oral literary materials, publishing them carefully, and studying them thoroughly. His texts — collected in Neiafu on Savai‘i from Ali‘imalemanu Falē and Moti Afatia — demonstrate what interesting materials are available in the living tradition, materials that would eventually be lost if unrecorded. His study of those texts demonstrates the same refreshing independence of his earlier work (Hovdhaugen 1986).

The texts are presented both as tape-recorded and in a version edited “to conform to the basic norms of the literary language . . .” (p.14)¹ and have been published very carefully. Typographical errors seem very few, but are, naturally, difficult to identify owing to the necessary use of nonstandard spelling; but see fānua for fānau (p.51, n.18), faiolai (p.68, paragraph 3, line 3) for feiloa‘i (tape-recording, p.116, paragraph 3, line 3); One (p.139 at fa‘aigoa) for Ona (pp.34, 109).²

Even the best Polynesian dictionaries can be enriched by a study of such texts (Milner 1966; xiii; Pukui and Elbert 1986: vii f.). Hovdhaugen is able to add words, senses, and uses to Milner (1966) and Pratt (1960) and to disagree with them (pp.122–218). Good examples of additions are ëfu‘a and lāliga palo (pp.65, 161). Some of his additions can be found in other published texts, such as fa‘asamisi (p.142; Krämer 1903:41). The use of fa‘ae‘e (pp.138f.) in genealogies is common.

Such texts can provide material also for the study of grammar. Hovdhaugen can find passages that enlarge our sense of the possibilities available to the speaker of Samoan, materials that can also be supported by texts published earlier. Compare his remarks on verbs and directional particles (pp.133, 172, 175, 212) with Krämer 1903:140, paragraph 1, line 5: e lē torô fa‘atasi ma ialo.

The flexibility of Polynesian languages has, of course, been recognised, but its extent has yet to be measured. For instance, Hovdhaugen defines “universals” as “lexemes that function both as nouns and as verbs” (p.123; see p.193 for a strik-
ing example). But fa'apea can be used as an adverb, verb, or noun, depending on its position. Its use as a noun is clear in the example i le fa'apea (p.58 line 1, 142; cf. Krämer 1903:63, 94). Examples of such a use of other words can be found (e.g., Krämer 1903:322, paragraph 2, line 2: i le ò mai sisiva). Such detailed work enables Hovdhaugen to make interesting points about the differences between the spoken and the literary language and about the variability of Samoan through the island group (e.g., pp.13ff., 131ff., 137, 145, 153, 158, 206, 211). An odd indication of that variability is that, while on Tutuila for a year in 1972-3, I received no hint of the ideological connections of i and k that Bradd Shore found in Sala'ialua (Shore 1982:268-82).

The lexical richness, flexibility, and variability of Samoan arc clearly artistic resources for its speakers and should not be needlessly sacrificed to the advantages of simplification and standardisation (Charlot 1977a:65f.). For instance, words used only on certain islands or in particular districts, villages, or families were recorded regularly in 19th century works, and the restricted area of their use was clearly noted. Such variability can be found even more easily in Samoan literature, in which traditions are adapted to localities, political purposes, individual tendencies, and so on (e.g., p.12; cf. genealogies, pp.92f.). Hovdhaugen is able to add considerable material on proverbs and sayings (e.g., pp.29, n.9; 41, n.23; 49f., n.5; 50f., n.9; 51, n.12; 86, n.34).

The very full notes provide variations in names, episodes, and stories from an admirably wide range of sources. Such comparisons help in the delineation of a more common tradition as opposed to individual variations (e.g., pp.26-30), in the identification of motifs (e.g, pp.62, n.2; 65, n.15), and so on.

Such comparisons also make possible the identification of a given individual's tendencies in storytelling. For instance, Ali'imailemanu Falé, Hovdhaugen's main informant, avoided using the word "aiiti" (p.64, n.13), a practice that could mislead someone studying Samoan religion primarily from these texts. Ali'imailemanu also tended to modernise his stories by simplifying and humanising or historicising them (pp.32f., 40). The storyteller himself made explicit his worry that a certain story was long and difficult (p.62). Individuals can, of course, also localise materials (p.83, n.15), bowdlerise them (p.64, n.9), be inconsistent (pp.84, n.21; 86, n.31), and make mistakes (p.85, n.25).

This richness of variation in the Samoan storytelling tradition should also be regarded as a cultural resource, not a problem to be solved by composite versions designed to avoid favour and offence.

Hovdhaugen makes interesting points about the relation of spoken to literary storytelling. For instance, a tighter, more regular organisation of a story is found in the version written in Ali'imailemanu's 'api, school exercise-book, used for generations by Samoans to record their materials for their own purposes (pp.43 and text 46-9). The recognition of the fact that, when Samoan storytellers write, they themselves organise their materials more thoroughly is important for understanding the work of such collectors as Krämer and Stuebel (1896). That is, the less loosely oral character of their texts could have been the work of their Samoan colleagues, who helped take down the dictation by informants and then
to some degree edited the texts. Such organisation would not be, therefore, a Western imposition, but the realisation of an authentic potentiality of the indigenous literature.

Hovdhaugen’s translations are careful and literal, with few exceptions. The translation of ‘O le ‘upu a le uso leneti as ‘The message of the brothers’ removes a difficulty in the Samoan text by providing an interpretation of it.

Hovdhaugen’s painstaking work has resulted in a book that will be very useful for future research in the field. Hovdhaugen just mentions aspects of oral literary practice — gesture (p.77), performance, social setting, and so on — that are of central interest to others. The possible influence on the oral tradition of written sources such as Krämer, Stuebel, Bülow, and newspapers (e.g., pp.92ff.), could also be explored.

Hovdhaugen makes just a few remarks on Samoan story structure (pp.18, 43, 65ff.; 87, n.38; 95), a subject on which I am currently working. Moti Afatia’s “The story about Tagaloalagi and Pava” (pp.89ff.) is, in fact, a perfect example of the single-story structure I have described in Hawaiian literature (Charlot 1977b:480–3): introduction (‘O aso lā . . . ma Pava), time reference leading to narrative (Ona o’o lea i le tasi aso), narrative (‘ua soli . . . Iona atali’i), and conclusion (‘O le aha . . . aua Sāmoa), with terminal sentence (faa, ‘o lea). Such stories are then joined by various devices into larger complexes (Charlot 1977b:483–90).

Each literature, naturally, has its special devices, characteristics, and emphases. For instance, Samoan literature makes extensive use of genealogies to structure such complexes, a practice, I will argue, that developed from the recitation of genealogies with the occasional insertion of stories about the people listed.

For the purpose of my own study, Hovdhaugen’s presentation of his texts as transmitted has a number of benefits. For instance, all the stories told by Ali’imalemanu have a titular sentence and all but one (p.48), a terminal sentence or expression. Significantly, of the 17 stories published by Richard Moyle, all have terminal sentences and seven have titles (1981:50, 56, 110, 196, 264, 274, 284). The regularity of these elements is greater in these exactly transcribed oral performances than in earlier, more edited texts, suggesting that they may have been cut before publication. That is, Samoan oral literature may be even more formal than appears from the available evidence.

More work needs to be done along the lines so fruitfully exemplified by Hovdhaugen.

NOTES
1. Compare the interesting anecdotes, pp.66; 91, n.5; 93, 207, which show the consciousness with which Samoans move between colloquial speech and literary language.
2. A few typographical errors appear in non-Samoan sections: Sierich for Sierich (p.64, n.4), Traeger regularly for Tregear, geneology (p.12), published instead of publish (p.14), Samoan regularly without the macron (by decision?), ceremonial for ceremonial (p.90, n.1), dauther for daughter (p.103, n.31), lay for laid (p.151), vasted for wasted (p.170, twice).
3. Pp.68, 72,74; 79ff., n.9; 83, n.17. For an additional use, see Sierich 1902:188. Much more material can be found, e.g., Schultz 1910.

4. E.g., Bülow 1898:11, *Sa fa 'i Nīna faapea ina ao a mo* — "Sina did thus every day..."

5. One can, of course, disagree with some of Hovdhaugen's points. For instance, I would analyse at least some occurrences of his ai′ as his āi′ plus i (as, pp.68, paragraph 3, line 9; p.76, paragraph 1, line 3), rather than ai′ plus i.

6. E.g., for islands, Krämer 1903:143; for families, Bülow 1908:166.

7. Is the couple mentioned on p.51, n.13, nameless because of the author's tendency?

REFERENCES


