
I cannot write a regular review of *The Voices of Eden* because I read it in typescript and am mentioned in the acknowledgements. Albert Schütz showed me his book in progress while I was working on the related topic of classical Hawaiian education. His research supplemented my own, and his conclusions were encouragingly similar to mine. I often had the impression that we were walking down the opposite sides of the same street. Schütz also made very valuable comments and criticisms of my writing. I am therefore writing here merely an informal and personal notice.¹

Fortunately the virtues of the book are clear without my calling attention to them. Schütz has assumed the difficult task of writing the history of a scholarly field. Such studies are important for the field itself because they help us to appreciate the state of the art. They are valuable also for illuminating the historical attitudes of scholars, who in this case have been primary opinion-makers in an on-going and complicated contact between Hawaiian and Western cultures. The difficulty of such a task is making the scholarly field—in this case the very technical one of linguistics—accessible to outsiders. Schütz demonstrates not only that this can be done, but that such a history can be made a good read. I am very much a member of the general public when it comes to linguistics, but I was carried along by Schütz’s witty style and narrative skill.

Schütz manages to delight without skimping on scholarship. He is refreshingly professional in a field crowded with amateurs. The reader feels secure that the research is solid and the positions up-to-date. The field is unrolled before one—in rich but never overwhelming detail—from its halting beginnings to its latest controversies. Alphabets and syllabaries, sounds and accents, organisations of grammars, become as intriguing as clues in a detective story. Schütz enjoys his subject, and the reader quickly joins him.

Schütz’s very professionalism makes him focus on scholars and works that have made a contribution to the current state of the art. He is impatient with emotions and discarded ideas. He mentions and disposes of views of Hawaiian as a simple, primitive, childlike, or degenerate language, and does not explore how such views were
connected to Western attitudes towards non-Western peoples. Those attitudes however can be used as a barometer of consideration for Hawaiian culture as a whole. For instance, three articles by John Rae published in 1862 are now considered linguistically incorrect, but were influential at the time in establishing Hawaiian as a respectable intellectual subject. Indeed the interest of distinguished foreigners in Hawaiian is mentioned often by local scholars to justify it as an object of study to a local public that either depreciated the language or took it for granted. I am reminded of the surprise of many New Zealanders that outsiders would be so interested in Māori art! Similarly Schütz discusses only tangentially the study of Hawaiian literature, a fascinating topic in itself, which both parallels and differs from the study of language.

Schütz is of course aware of these and other areas that require further research. I am particularly interested in the language changes made in the early missionary period and in the ways different generations of Hawaiians interpreted their own literature. Fortunately, Schütz can end his book on a note of hope. More students are entering Hawaiian language courses, more teachers are being trained, and more courses are being established. Schütz is so scrupulous about acknowledging his helpers that we can read for the first time in print some of the names of the next generation of scholars—the new voices of Eden—who give us such hope that the necessary work will be done.

NOTES

1. The production is good, but the footnote number 46 is repeated on page 370 for footnote 47; that and the following footnote numbers need to be corrected until footnote 59 (the original 58 seems to have been lost).

REFERENCES


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