



The Kumulipo A Hawaiian Creation Chant

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THE Kalakaua text of the Hawaiian genealogical prayer chant called the "Kumulipo" covers sixty-six pages of a small pamphlet printed in Honolulu in 1889 after a manuscript copy at that time in the possession of the ruling King Kalakaua but now the property of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, to which it passed in 1922 from the estate of Prince Kalanianaole, nephew of the former rulers. A prose note of two pages attached to the text tells the circumstances under which the chant was allegedly composed and recited in old days.

Except for the third paragraph relating the connection of the chant to the line of ruling chiefs from whom the Hawaiian monarchy of that period claimed descent, the prose note derives from the manuscript source. A European scholar, the eminent German anthropologist Adolf Bastian, first called attention to the manuscript of the Kumulipo. During a month's stay in Honolulu in the course of a tour of the Far East, he learned of the existence of a Hawaiian cosmogonic chant, borrowed the king's copy, and was able to translate passages from the first eleven sections and to obtain some light on their meaning. This text and translation, together with comparison with other cosmogonies from Polynesia and from ancient Asiatic as well as European civilizations, Bastian incorporated into a volume called *Die heilige Sage der Polynesier*, published in 1881 in Leipzig.

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