

HANDBOOK OF  
**Polynesian  
Mythology**

**Robert D. Craig**



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# Handbook of Polynesian Mythology

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# Handbook of Polynesian Mythology

Robert D. Craig



Santa Barbara, California • Denver, Colorado • Oxford, England

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Craig, Robert D., 1934–

Handbook of Polynesian mythology / Robert D. Craig.

p. cm. — (Handbooks of world mythology)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-57607-894-9 (hardcover : alk. paper)—ISBN 1-57607-895-7 (e-book)

1. Mythology, Polynesian. I. Title. II. Series.

BL2620.P6C72 2004

299'.924—dc22

2004006534

07 06 05 04 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This book is also available on the World Wide Web as an e-book.  
Visit [www.abc-clio.com](http://www.abc-clio.com) for details.

ABC-CLIO, Inc.

130 Cremona Drive, P.O. Box 1911

Santa Barbara, California 93116–1911

This book is printed on acid-free paper .

Manufactured in the United States of America

*To Katharine Luomala, whose spirit  
remains as a voice on the wind*



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# PREFACE

It's always nice to have a publisher ask you to write a book, and I appreciate ABC-CLIO Press's invitation to write this volume to complement the others in its series on World Mythology. It's also particularly interesting that the editors chose to include Polynesia within their geographical parameters for this series, because Oceania and particularly Polynesia have often been passed over by other publishers on the subject. I am sure that those publishers are unaware of the wonderful stories that survive from the ancient world of Polynesia.

Many of you may not be fully acquainted with Polynesians—the indigenous people of the Pacific—who first settled the “many islands” of the North and South Pacific thousands of years ago. They are the people who make up the island groups we call today American Sāmoa, Hawai'i, Cook Islands, Easter Island, French Polynesia, New Zealand, Sāmoa, Tokelau, Tonga, and Tuvalu. These are the islands of Polynesia, and this book is about their cultural heritage.

Little was known about the enthralling Polynesian chants and legends outside the Pacific until well into the nineteenth century, when a few scholars collected and translated them into Western languages (primarily English and French) so that they could be read and appreciated by modern readers. The “Introduction” that follows highlights several of these tireless scholars whose works have become classics. Without them, much of what has transpired in the field of folklore in the twentieth century could not have been achieved. I am one of those appreciative researchers who continually stands in awe of the monumental work that they accomplished. I am also grateful for the resurgence in the public interest in Pacific and Polynesian subjects (what we call the “Polynesian Renaissance”) that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s. That Renaissance was just getting under way when I first moved to Hawai'i in 1966 and became interested in Polynesia. Ever since, I have been actively engaged in research and writing about the Pacific, and particularly about my “adopted” islands.

This *Handbook of Polynesian Mythology* was written for a general audience rather than for the academic world. It does not pretend to be all-inclusive, where one can find references to all of the mythological stories of Polynesia. Scholars who wish such a volume are referred to my more monumental work, the *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989). This

current volume concentrates on the retelling and commenting upon the important mythologies of the Polynesians so that the reader gains a much better understanding of their cosmology and culture. Of course, there is always the danger of inserting one's own beliefs and interpretations into their writings, and, hopefully, I have been sensitive to that issue. There is always another danger of writing so close to the original texts that there is the possibility of committing plagiarism. So I have tried to walk the tightrope between the two, and hopefully the results are satisfactory.

Another requirement for scholarly research into these ancient texts is the ability to read the indigenous Polynesian languages—Hawaiian, Māori, Rapanui, Tongan, Samoan, Tuvaluan, and Tahitian, for example. Unfortunately, my ability in Pacific languages is limited to a little Tahitian and Hawaiian, and, as a result, my research over the years has been done almost completely through translation, primarily English, French, and German. I envy those scholars who read the chants in the originals and who can interpret the various nuances that only the originals offer. But, of course, there are many legends that were recorded for the first time in English, French, and German, and in these cases, therefore, we do not have any indigenous texts.

I am a trained historian (actually a medievalist with a literature minor) not a folklorist, and my interests and understanding of these texts come from that background. In all of my previous publications, I have had little or no opportunity to write beyond the strict interpretation of my data, but in this work, I have had the task of summarizing stories and polishing my own interpretations so that those summaries are interesting to my readers. It is my highest hope that the stories contained herein might find a wider public than what they have in the past. Perhaps, I might be able to be one of those trumpets “through which the musical Polynesian voice might make itself heard and attract attention to the power and personality behind the voice . . .” (Johannes C. Andersen, *Myths and Legends of the Polynesians*. London: Harrap, 1928, 4).

There are many individuals who helped in the production of this work. Thanks, of course, go to the first European explorers who visited the Pacific and left vivid tales of the South Seas. It was those stories—the mutiny of the *Bounty*, for example—that first attracted my attention to Polynesia, just as they have done to millions of others who have read them. Thanks to the early missionaries and Polynesians who first set down these wonderful tales for posterity, and then to the subsequent anthropologists who visited the more remote islands and who left detailed summaries of their island cultures. A special thanks goes to my friend Katherine Luomala, whose book *Voices on the Wind* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1955) and whose personal encouragement during her last few years converted me to the study of Polynesian myths and chants.

There are, of course, more current people and organizations to thank for help in this volume. First, my heartfelt thanks to the various members of the Institute for Polynesian Studies in Hawai'i who have consistently come to my aid in time of need—Vernice Wineera, Dale Robertson, Riley Moffatt, Max and Marge Stanton, and Greg Gubler. Without them, I would not have been able to finish this work within my publisher's time frame. Another special thanks goes to individuals who assisted in obtaining illustrations—my son Larry Craig (Laguna Beach, California), Christian Durocher (Tahitipresse, Pape'ete), and Bernard Cloutier (Québec, Canada)—as well as the many other institutions whose names are credited in the illustrations' credits.

One other point before beginning, and this deals with the Polynesian languages and their orthography. Chapter 1 adequately handles both subjects, but some readers may think it strange to see Hawaii written as Hawai'i with a glottal stop ("reverse apostrophe") between the two "i's" or Samoa written as Sāmoa with a long vowel accent ("macron") over the "a." Printed Polynesian texts require these properly placed accent marks, just as French requires them over its vowels (*été*, for example). The state of Hawai'i began using these many years ago, and other island groups are following suit. Their use prevents any ambiguity and determines the proper translation of the written word. Another unusual feature is the use of long proper names in Polynesia. The Tahitian name Tupuanu-itefa'aonono, for example, is actually several words written together. Sometimes, a dash is placed between the words to indicate their separation, such as Tupua-nui-te-fa'a-onono, meaning in English "Persistent Great Growth," to aid the reader, but on other occasions, and more properly, they are simply dropped.

The organization of this volume follows that which was established earlier in this series on world mythology. Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the geography of the Pacific islands and more specifically to the islands of Polynesia. It summarizes the various theories regarding the origin of the Polynesians and then presents an overall summary of their cultures, including a discussion of their languages and literature. A section on the "Recorded Texts" provides a bibliographical essay on the original texts from which I gathered my sources for the main portion of this volume.

Chapter 2 details Polynesian cosmology and the creation of the world. It briefly summarizes creation stories from several different islands, and then it reproduces part of a Tuamotuan creation chant—*The Psalm of the Creation*—in English translation to illustrate the beauty of Polynesian chant.

Chapter 3, of course, is the main bulk of the work. This chapter includes over eighty individual entries on different topics, ranging from biographical sketches of gods, goddesses, and heroes (Tāne, Hina, Pele, and Māui, for example) to more specific background information on Polynesian life (dance, drums,



god images, and warfare, for example). Bibliographical references are given after each entry so the reader can undertake further research on that specific topic. Remember, though, that the number of entries within this chapter is not inclusive of the entire Polynesian repertory, but each was selected for either its being widely accepted throughout the islands or for specific points that needed to be included here for clarification.

Chapter 4 offers an annotated bibliography of the major sources, both mythological and historical, for the writing of this book. It is not inclusive and does not contain all of the references mentioned at the end of each of the entries in Chapter 3. It does include, however, the most important sources on Polynesian mythology and prehistory, including individual island groups, and a brief annotation after each source reveals something about the author and the book itself. For a more complete bibliography, refer to my earlier publication, *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), pages xxix through xlvii.

Chapter 5 is a brief annotated listing of the most current Internet Web sites that provide general background information on the current status of the island groups and a general introduction to Polynesian mythology. Very few Polynesian legends are actually available online, and researchers still must resort to printed texts for anything substantial. Hopefully, one of these days, a complete database of Polynesian mythological references will be available online. Remember, too, that Web sites very frequently go offline or change their URL addresses, so the Internet references in Chapter 4 are not as permanent as published texts. In addition, it is important to assess the reliability of information posted on the Internet. Some information is more reliable than others, and the source should always be considered.

In conclusion, I hope this work may stimulate all of you to probe more deeply into this fascinating and rewarding subject. A framework or a type of skeleton is presented within the following chapters, and references for further study are presented in the bibliography. Work still needs to be done in editing old texts, and, of course, more sensitive and skillful writers than I are needed to publish the stories in translation so that the beauty of the original Polynesian word might be further appreciated by modern readers.

Robert D. Craig  
Sarasota, Florida  
August 2003

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## INTRODUCTION

**M**y first acquaintance with Polynesia came in 1966 when I moved from Texas, where I had been teaching, to my new assignment in Hawai'i. The five-hour flight from Los Angeles seemed interminable, and when the plane doors finally opened in Honolulu, I got my first scent of the salty ocean breeze, and the brisk trade winds brought a refreshing relief from the stifling airplane air I had been breathing. The welcome greetings on the tarmac were unparalleled—smiling, brown-skinned hosts draped sweet-scented plumeria leis around us, and Hawaiian melodies came floating over the crowd from a small instrumental band stationed near the lean-to from which we picked up our luggage. Delicious, fresh pineapple juice flowed out of fountains from which you could drink freely. My romantic dream of Polynesia had become a reality. Little did I realize that scenes such as this had been experienced millions of times since the first Europeans “discovered” these beautiful islands of Polynesia two hundred years ago.

During my first year of teaching in Hawai'i, I was determined to find out more about Polynesia and its people. As a result, students in my senior history seminar were given a research assignment to pick a particular topic on pre-European Polynesia for their senior project. The seminar was a huge success. We had a dozen papers written about ancient Polynesia, many of them on the topic of mythology, and I was hooked. From that time on, my interest grew until ten years later, a small group of us formed the Institute for Polynesian Studies and began publishing a scholarly journal entitled *Pacific Studies*, both of which are still quite active. My research and writing about Polynesia have also continued throughout the past thirty-seven years, for I have never ceased admiring the unique peoples and cultures I first met in 1966.

### PACIFIC GEOGRAPHY

The Pacific Ocean is the largest in the world. It stretches eleven thousand miles from east to west at the equator, nine thousand miles from north to south, and covers one-third of the earth's surface. Far in the distant past, landmasses in this

vast region rose and sank many times, leaving islands consisting of high volcanic mountains or coral atolls that dot the vast regions of the ocean. A large number of these islands were formed in the western Pacific as part of the Asian landmass, and today this thick belt of islands tapers off as we move further eastward, reaching its apex at Easter Island in the South Pacific and Hawai'i in the North Pacific. Beginning with the Philippines and Indonesia in the west, these islands form various groupings as they stretch across the Pacific. The Micronesian ("small") islands spread across the North Pacific, the Melanesian ("black") islands toward the southeast, and the Polynesian ("many") islands stretch from there on to the eastern Pacific region. Collectively, the perimeter of the Polynesian islands resembles a large triangle, popularly called the Polynesian Triangle that extends from Hawai'i in the north to New Zealand in the southwest and to Easter Island in the southeast (see map in Figure 1.1). The societies and cultures contained within Polynesia can be further divided into Western Polynesia (Tonga, Sāmoa, and the Ellice group), Central Polynesia (the Cook, Society, and Austral Islands), and Eastern Polynesia (the Tuamotus, Marquesas, and Easter Island with Hawai'i to the north and New Zealand to the south).

The even, tropical climate of the Polynesian islands is generally tempered by the ocean and winds, and, as a result, the islands do not experience the sweltering heat found on the neighboring continents. For most of the year, trade winds blow from the north-northeast in the North Pacific and from the south-southeast in the South Pacific. The ocean currents in the North Pacific circle clockwise, but in the south, they circle counterclockwise. Where they come together at the equator, they form a narrow equatorial countercurrent, popularly called the Doldrums. These prevailing winds and ocean currents aided the ancient Polynesians in exploring and settling these many chains of islands.

Before the Polynesians first settled them, however, these islands were lacking in natural resources necessary for survival. As the Polynesians explored from one island to another, they had to bring with them plant foods—banana, breadfruit, coconut, taro, and yam—and animals such as the chicken, dog, and pig. All of the major plants and animals had to be introduced into the islands by humans.

### THE POLYNESIANS—FROM WHENCE DID THEY COME?

Thousand of years before Europeans knew anything existed beyond their limited geographical landmass, Pacific peoples were sailing across these many islands in search of new lands and homes. Sir Peter Buck (1880–1951), a famous Māori scholar and writer, referred to these ancient peoples as the Vikings of the Pacific, because they ventured eastward across the Indonesian landmass into the remote

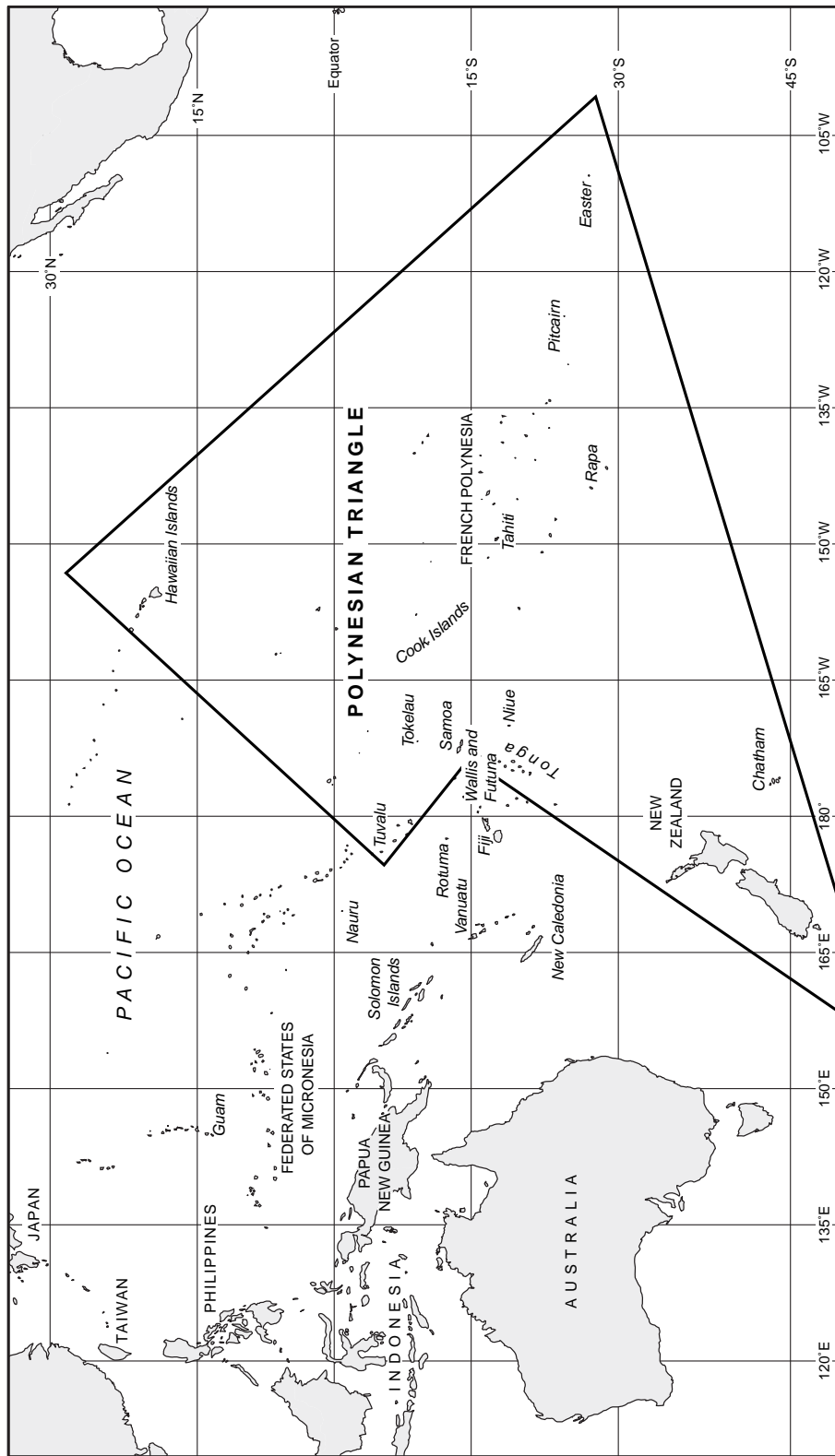


Figure 1.1: The Polynesian Triangle

regions of the Pacific Ocean by the use of their sophisticated knowledge of the stars, winds, and ocean currents similar to the medieval Vikings of Scandinavia in their explorations of the North Atlantic.

When the early European explorers eventually happened upon these remarkable and unique people they called Polynesians, the explorers began to question the Polynesians' origins. British explorer Captain James Cook (1728–1779), who explored much of the Pacific Ocean and who was familiar with most of the Pacific cultures, surmised that the Polynesians had originated in Malaysia (Southeast Asia) because their customs and languages resembled those cultures found further to the west. Cook and his colleagues were not trained anthropologists, and it is remarkable that after two hundred years of speculation and widespread disagreement, this theory still remains the most tenable.

In the nineteenth century, however, scholars proposed many other theories. In 1837, Jaques A. Moerenhout, a Belgian/French merchant in Tahiti, proposed the lost-continent theory—a theory that the Polynesians were descendents of people who lived on a vast Pacific continent before it sank into the Pacific Ocean. These ancient peoples, he said, had essentially settled the land before the earth's shift and were isolated on the mountain tops as the lower landmasses sank into the ocean. Reverend Samuel Marsden (d. 1838), a British Christian missionary to New Zealand, suggested that the Polynesians were remnants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel and tried to connect their cultures and languages to those of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Palestine. On the other hand, William Ellis (1794–1872), a British missionary to Hawai'i, argued that the Polynesians originated in Asia but sailed into the Pacific from the northwest coast of North America, a thesis similar to the one adopted and promoted by Thor Heyderdahl in the 1950s.

During the late nineteenth century, the scientific world introduced a new method of approaching and evaluating truth. As a result, numerous new social sciences came into being—anthropology, archaeology, economics, sociology, psychology—and even historical research and writing went through revolutionary developments. As these new disciplines continued to develop in the twentieth century, new scholars evaluated the old theories concerning Polynesian origins, and others forged ahead doing field research to add to or to validate the data that had previously been collected throughout the Pacific. Subsequent studies in the area of botany, genetics, linguistics, archaeology, and mythology essentially support the theory that Captain Cook proposed in the late eighteenth century—that the Polynesians descended from the Mongoloid division of the human family and that they entered into the Pacific by way of Malaysia and Indonesia.

Almost all scientific evidence supports this Southeast Asian/Indonesian point of origin. The plants (breadfruit, pandanus, yams, sugarcane) and animals

(pig, dog, chicken) brought into the Pacific by the Polynesians were first domesticated in Southeast Asia. One exception, of course, is the sweet potato, which certainly had its origin in South America. Some writers try to prove an American connection, saying that the first Polynesians set sail from South America, bringing the sweet potato with them. It is more likely, however, that the Polynesians, in their explorations eastward, continued across the Pacific, hit the coast of South America, where they came into contact with the potato, and then returned with it to Polynesia.

Genetics also provides evidence of a racial mixture before entering the area—a mixture consisting of paleo-Caucasoid, Negroid, and Mongoloid characteristics, which directly links the Polynesians to Melanesia, Indonesia, and Southeast Asia. Polynesian languages (discussed later in this chapter) certainly form a close affinity to the other Austronesian family of languages, a family that stretches from Easter Island in the eastern Pacific through Melanesia and on to Southeast Asia and Madagascar, off the coast of East Africa. Recent archaeology since World War II maintains a similar argument of a western origin. Relics of Lapita pottery in Tonga and to a lesser degree in Sāmoa and the Marquesas (and lacking in the rest of Polynesia) and carbon dating support this theory.

Based upon all of the available data, let us now summarize the general migration pattern of the Polynesians across the Pacific. In prehistory times (35,000 B.C.), two separate movements of human beings pushed into Southeast Asia through New Guinea. The first was comprised of the hunter-gatherers of the Pleistocene epoch, and the second was a wave of Austronesian-language speakers out of south China and Taiwan about 4000 B.C. The latter pushed through Melanesia (most likely Fiji) fairly quickly, mixing with Melanesians on the way, and arriving at the western edge of Polynesian about 2000 B.C. All evidence indicates that these peoples settled Tonga by 1300 B.C. and Sāmoa by 1000 B.C. After a lengthy time in Sāmoa in which the language and culture became somewhat differentiated from the islands to the west, Polynesians began to push out and settle the more remote islands to the east. The Marquesas Islands were settled by A.D. 400 and the Society Islands by A.D. 800. From the Marquesas, Polynesians settled Easter Island by A.D. 400–500, Hawai'i by A.D. 750, the Cook and Austral Islands by A.D. 800, and New Zealand by A.D. 1100. (It appears that two separate migrations occurred both in Hawai'i and in New Zealand.) By A.D. 1100, essentially the last major regions of Polynesia had been settled.

One question that has always puzzled the modern scientist is how the Polynesians were able to settle these vast islands, some lying thousands of miles from one another. Some scholars propose a “drift theory,” which maintains that Polynesians, sailing out to sea to fish or to visit a neighboring island in their small canoes or rafts, were blown out to sea. Some of these drifters evidently survived and

reached safety at a distant island, and from there they settled down and created a new society and culture. This, of course, contradicts numerous traditional stories among the Polynesians of planned mass migrations from one island group to another and then a return voyage to pick up additional relatives and food supplies.

When Captain Cook visited Tahiti in 1768 and 1769, he discovered the remains of a huge, double-hulled canoe that would have held more men and supplies than his own ship. He also witnessed the mustering of hundreds of war canoes to battle by Chief Pomare to fight his enemies. This type of double-hulled canoe (similar to a catamaran) is Polynesia's single most important artifact. Some of these canoes measured a hundred feet in length and carried three hundred passengers (see the "Canoes" entry in chapter 3). Most scholars agree that the discovery of the various Pacific islands was deliberately planned by the Polynesians and that their navigational skills allowed them to return to their homeland after they had settled a new home.

### TRADITIONAL POLYNESIAN SOCIETY, ECONOMY, AND CULTURE

To make generalizations regarding all the cultures of ancient Polynesian societies would draw the ire of almost every Polynesian and scholar today. Although these ancient societies varied from one group to another, there are some generally accepted characteristics that make individuals living in New Zealand, Hawai'i, and Easter Island seem related one to another. Those characteristics essentially make them Polynesian rather than Melanesian or Micronesian—the other peoples of the Pacific.

Anciently, each Polynesian island was geographically divided into territorial divisions. The high volcanic islands like Hawai'i, Sāmoa, and Tonga, for example, were divided into pie-shaped districts with the apex at the top of the mountains and their boundaries extending down to the seashore. Individual tribe members who dwelt in each of the districts had access to the seashore for fishing, the uplands for living and crop planting, and the mountains for wood and other foods. On small atolls like the Tuamotus, however, a single tribe might have occupied an entire islet or a grouping of islets rather than a small portion of land on one island.

Within these land divisions, Polynesians lived in scattered huts rather than in villages. Some well-to-do or resourceful Polynesians may personally have had several functional dwellings located throughout the district; for example, a Polynesian might have had an eating house for the men, separate from the women and *tapu* (forbidden) to them; another house where the wife and children lived

and not *tapu* to the husband; a shelter for the wife where she could beat her tapa clothing during inclement weather; a house where the wife lived during her monthly menstrual period; and a small family chapel where sacred artifacts were kept. Sometimes, a canoe shed that housed and protected the outrigger canoe would be built near the shore and another hut built for the protection and storage of food. Chiefs of the tribe would have retainers and companions who lived in close proximity, and these nucleated huts somewhat resembled a village.

Individuals within each district of the island belonged to a specific tribe, usually ruled over by a chief, who held this position by hereditary right, usually from his father (see the “Chiefly Class” entry in chapter 3). Chiefs also claimed additional authority through a power the Polynesians called *mana* (see the “Mana” entry in chapter 3). *Mana* was inherited from famous ancestors, and it could also be gained through impressive earthly achievements, such as success in war. In some island groups (Tahiti, Sāmoa, Tonga, and Mangareva, for example), the power of the high chiefs was so great that they had to be carried above ground on a dais so that their feet would not touch land belonging to their subordinates; otherwise the land would revert to the chief’s ownership. In Hawai’i, the *ali’i nui* (high chiefs) often hoped to preserve their powerful lineage by marrying their closest relatives, their sisters.

Europeans who first visited these islands observed a middle class, called the *matāpule* in Tonga and the *ra’atira* in Tahiti. Description of this class by the early European writers is vague and perhaps a little suspect. Many of these writers tried to describe Polynesian societies in European terms when really these writers did not fully understand these new, foreign cultures. The *matāpule* may have been retainers of the ruling chiefs, who gained this prestige from their association with the high chiefs, and in Tahiti, they were said to have been the first inhabitants of the islands who had been conquered by the high chiefs, the *ari’i nui*. The usefulness of this middle class—being superb craftsmen, highly educated, or skilled in terms of warfare—may have brought about their elevation from the common class. Whatever may have been the cause of their elevated status, this class remained extremely small in comparison to the largest class in society—the commoners.

The commoners (*maka’āinana* in Hawai’i, *manahune* in Tahiti, *tu’a* in Tonga) consisted of all individuals in the tribe who were not members of the chiefly class, slaves, or prisoners of war. These commoners were the farmers, fishermen, laborers, and craftsmen. They fared fairly well compared to commoners in many other places in the world, for they lived on beautiful islands that provided most of their food easily, and they were generally free of the infectious diseases and dangerous insects and animals that affected most of humanity. But they were not entirely free from arduous labor. The men were



hardly ever idle. They had to provide labor for their chiefs' many building projects, and they worked hard at gathering food every day for their family's sustenance, either fishing in the lagoons or gathering foods from their gardens or mountains. They had to fashion their various tools by hand and then, with them, construct all their necessities. The men generally cooked the meals each day, for it was *tapu* for a woman to touch food consumed by the adult males in the family. Even while relaxing in the evenings, men routinely gathered pieces of short coconut fibers and hand plaited them into long pieces of twine called sennit.

Women also spent their days toiling in subsistence living. Their mornings were filled with cultivating, gathering, and collecting food—including the exhaustive work of gathering firewood—for the main meal of the day, usually prepared in early afternoon. They were responsible for the production of tapa cloth (for clothing and decoration), which took up a good deal of their time. The sounds of the tapa beaters could be heard in every village throughout the daylight hours. The women also wove fine mats and a variety of baskets, food platters, and other mats for use in their homes. They supervised the rearing of children, but often the oldest child had to care for the younger ones when the mother was otherwise busily engaged. She also taught the children whatever craft techniques they needed later in life. The status of women in ancient Polynesia was somewhat demeaning because there were numerous *tapus* preventing them from attending all the public ceremonies and rituals that were open to men. It was different, however, among the chiefly class, where a woman might have a more impressive lineage than any man, and in that case, she could assume duties and privileges not normally available to her.

The daily ritual of a typical Polynesian would go as follows. The morning was occupied in the main work for the day—gathering food from their farms inland, fishing in the lagoons, building houses, making tapa cloth—or simply in friendly chatter and relaxation. Both men and women bathed at least twice a day (some islanders even more), once in the morning when they first arose and again in the evening. This activity was usually accompanied by lighthearted play. Beds were simple tapa mats that were rolled up and stored in the rafters of the hut. Breakfast consisted generally of leftover food from the previous day. The main meal was prepared for early or midafternoon, and fish, bananas, breadfruit, and taro were gathered in the morning and prepared in an *imu* or *'umu* (underground oven). The busy time of the day, of course, was morning. After the main meal of the day, almost everyone spent one or two hours sleeping. The heat of the day at this time prevented any great amount of work from being done. Afterward, some work was resumed, but most of the afternoon and evening were devoted to

diversions and amusements. By nightfall, a light meal of leftovers was consumed, and after some talk and gossip, all was quiet. The only interruptions in this daily ritual were probably their frequent wars, religious festivities, visits of neighbors, and of course any natural calamity.

Ancient Polynesian histories are full of incessant wars that plagued the islands. Many scholars attribute the fast depopulation of many of the islands in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (and of Easter Island hundreds of years earlier) to these wars. (Western diseases, introduced by European explorers and settlers, also took their toll on the population.) Wars were fought because one district chief was jealous of another, because chiefs or priests sought self-aggrandizement or domination of their neighboring territories, because rebellions broke out against an oppressive leader, because someone broke off a treaty, or because rivals fought over a woman's love. The list was endless.

Special councils were called by the chiefs to hear the reasons for and against declaration of war. Priests were summoned and asked to offer prayers and sacrifices or to read animal entrails for any ill omens or prophetic signs. An especially serious war would demand a human sacrifice rather than the usual pig or dog. After all was considered, the high chief would finally make his decision and set the date for action. Heraldry was sent throughout the villages announcing the tribe's plans and advising each area to contribute certain provisions. Great warriors were especially esteemed by the people. Since most wars were fought face to face, war implements consisted of spears of all sorts (some formed with sharks' teeth to dismember the enemy even faster), heavy clubs fastened with rope that could be thrown and then retrieved again, and slings and stones. It was not unusual to see a chieftainess accompanying her warriors into battle. Very little planning or elaborate tactics were used or followed. Command and discipline seldom existed. If things became too tough for the warriors, the common reaction was for the whole army to break and run. The victors would show their success by proudly committing all types of indignities upon the defeated enemy—decapitation and cannibalism in some instances. Their own honorable dead, of course, were given decent burials; religious ceremonies with human sacrifices of their prisoners of war were conducted; the spoils of war were distributed; festivities were enjoyed; and finally the distribution of the newly won territory among the chiefs carried out. Boundaries might be lost for a short time, but they always seemed to be restored to their ancient lines of demarcation after the next war. At the time of European arrival, the islands appeared like a patchwork quilt, over which no one single political authority dominated a whole island or chain of islands. There were no kings as such, but several of the island groups (Hawai'i and Tonga, for example) were headed in that direction.

## Material Culture

Until the arrival of the Europeans, ancient Polynesians lived in a Stone Age culture. They had no metals with which to construct their various tools and utensils. Despite that, some of their surviving artifacts reveal that they achieved a high sophistication of skill and technique with their simple tools. Their primary construction tools consisted of various-sized stones that they used for hammers; stone adzes, consisting of a sharp rock hafted to a wooden handle by means of gum adhesives and cordage; sharp basalt flakes or seashells for scraping and cutting; and bones of animals for making needles for sewing, thatching, and weaving nets. Having no nails, the Polynesians had to bind objects together by the use of a cordage called sennit. Making sennit was a never-ending task performed by the men in the family. Short strands of husk from shells of the coconut were first twisted together by rubbing them between the hand and the thigh and by adding additional lengths of the husks until the two-ply cord became longer and longer. After that, multiple lengths of these fragile cords were plaited together to form even stronger cord. Once completed, the long length of sennit was generally wrapped into a ball until it was needed. Sennit was also used in making fishnets and the long lines attached to fishhooks, which were carved from bone, teeth, or wood.

Textiles used for clothing and bedding were made from tapa (bark cloth) constructed from the inner bark of various trees. Making tapa and tapa products was women's work, and very much like the making of sennit by men, these tasks frequently were performed while socializing and discussing the affairs of the day with others in the village. The quality of finished tapa ranged from the unadorned, sun-dried bark cloth to a highly decorated cloth painted with pigments from various nuts, plants, or berries. Common clothing consisted of a loincloth for the men (a rectangular piece of tapa cloth, about eight to twelve inches wide and five to six feet in length) wrapped around the waist and then down the front covering the genitalia and up the back where it was secured with the waist wrapping. Women wore a simple skirt, probably not much different from the *pāreu* casually worn in modern-day Tahiti. It was a rectangular piece of cloth, approximately thirty inches wide and three to four yards long. It was wrapped around the waist with the free end tucked in to secure it, usually falling to the knees.

Plaited mats made from the inner bark or leaves of various trees provided not only clothing, but floor coverings, room partitions, boat sails, and different-sized containers. Simple containers, plates, or head coverings could be made very quickly by plaiting fronds from the coconut tree. Finer containers and mats were made from the inner bark of certain trees and from the leaves of the pandanus plant. Very fine and pliable mats frequently took months to complete and were

highly prized, such as the Tongan *tao'vala*, a fine mat tied around one's waist, which was (and still is) worn in public to show respect, discretion, and honor. Fine mats were also used in gift exchanging and in paying one's "taxes."

Feathered cloaks were also used in Polynesia. The most exquisite ones come from Hawai'i, and numerous samples are found today in the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. The artisans used red feathers from the 'i'iwi bird and golden feathers from the *mamo* bird, and thousands of hours went into a cloak's construction. A net backing was first constructed and then each individual feather was hand tied to create these remarkable cloaks. The New Zealand Māori also produced exquisite cloaks, because the climate in that country is far from being tropical and warm all year-round. The cloak or poncho worn by commoners, of course, was usually made of tapa cloth with a hole cut into the center and was aimed solely at protecting the individual from rain or the cold.

Buildings within Polynesia ranged from the simple lean-to and small hut to the huge stone structures that rival any found elsewhere in the world. Most Polynesians lived in unadorned huts with posts, ridgepoles, and rafters made from the coconut trees or from the branches of other trees. Various types of thatching (grasses or woven mats) were then tied over the rafters to create a roof. The common house in Polynesia resembled what foreigners came to call a grass hut or a grass shack. Larger community buildings, however, took on different dimensions. Large, round-ended buildings in Sāmoa provided homes for chiefs as well as public gatherings. These were fashioned with community support, and the details of the lashing of the rafters and the fine mats and tapa make these extant buildings almost a national treasure. In New Zealand where the weather is cooler, the buildings were more substantial, and here again, the public buildings were highly decorated both inside and out.

Massive ancient stone structures are found in various parts of Polynesia. These remarkable structures resemble the ones found in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Americas, but unlike the structures found in these other areas, the Polynesian structures were fabricated without the use of any metal tools. Such stone structures in Polynesia range from the Tongan Ha'amonga-a-Māui, a Stonehenge-type of structure (see the "Ha'amonga-a-Māui" entry in chapter 3), to the outdoor religious temples of Tahiti (see the "Temples" entry in chapter 3), to the raised housing platforms found in the Marquesas, to the world-famous stone platforms and *moai* found on Easter Island (see the "Moai, Easter Island" entry in chapter 3).

Canoes were among the most important of all Polynesian artifacts (see the "Canoes" entry in chapter 3). They ranged in size from the simple one-man dugout to the massive double-hulled catamarans, which could hold up to three hundred people and make voyages across thousands of miles of the Pacific

Ocean. Some of these latter were highly decorated, and remnants of them can be found in museums throughout the world (see Illustrations 3.7 and 3.8 in chapter 3).

### **Polynesian Music, Dance, Games, and Diversions**

Music and dance played major roles in the cultural life of ancient Polynesian societies, not only for entertainment but for religious ceremonies as well. The number of musical instruments in Polynesia was extremely limited, and they consisted primarily of various-sized drums, slit gongs, and nose flutes. The expertise exhibited by the Polynesians playing these instruments and performing their dances, however, impressed the early explorers to the islands. Drums were generally cylindrical in shape with a sharkskin membrane stretched over the top of a hollowed-out log and held tightly tied to its bottom by the use of sennit. Slit gongs (or drums) are found throughout the world. They are made by hollowing out a trunk or branch of a tree, leaving a narrow slit along the top side and leaving the ends closed. Sticks of various sizes are used to beat on the slit gong to produce a percussion sound. Nose flutes were popular as well. They were made from sections of bamboo about a foot long and an inch in diameter. A hole was drilled through the top of one section, and several holes through its bottom. The performer placed the thumb of the right hand against the right nostril and held the flute with the right fingers up to the left nostril through which air was blown. Because the size of the holes and the length of the bamboo differed, sounds from various flutes generally sounded different from one another. Also, there were no written musical notations or standards against which to compare sounds.

Dance is one of Polynesia's most treasured and unique art forms. Anciently, dances were performed both for religious ceremonies and for entertainment by both men and women, singly or in a group. Polynesian mythology abounds with stories of the many demigods and heroes who excelled in dance competitions with their rivals, and there are stories that tell of how the first dances were introduced to human beings. The early European navigators described the Polynesian dances as graceful, eloquent, and diverse, and all classes of society participated in them. Anciently, the dances were performed to chants or to the accompaniment of musical instruments—drums, slit gongs, and nose flutes—and the steps differed widely from one island group to another. Dances from Sāmoa and Tonga, for example, were characterized by the rhythmic pulsating of the legs and lower body and by hand clapping, while those from Tahiti and Hawai'i, on the other hand, were characterized by the swaying of hips, the var-

ied movements of the hands, wrists, and arms, as well as facial contortions. Believing the traditional dances to be sinful, crude, and obscene, the early Christian missionaries forbade their performance. European musical instruments made their way into Polynesia during the nineteenth century, and the structure of music and dance changed drastically. In the twentieth century, new forms of song and dance were created to appeal to the foreign tourists who flocked to the islands in hopes of finding paradise, and the old forms were forgotten. During the last thirty years, however, there has been a renewed interest in the revival of the traditional music and dance, and in most dance competitions these days, the ancient dance performers gain the greatest audience approval.

Besides music and dance, Polynesians participated in numerous games and sports. Children played games common all over the world—jump rope, hide-and-seek, blind-man's bluff, swinging, sliding, stilt walking, diving and swimming, and as they got older, they added surfboard riding, footracing, boxing, wrestling, boat racing, and cockfighting. Time never went idle for the Polynesians. When not working or participating in the various sports mentioned above, there was always what Europeans called idle chatter. Characteristically, Polynesians loved to talk and to recite stories, and conversation—their chief strong point—was their most pleasurable pastime. They would sit for hours reciting ancient chants, prayers, ballads, maxims, proverbs, love lyrics, genealogies, riddles, jokes, and jests.

No account of Polynesian diversions would be complete without some description of their sexual behavior, for the Polynesians considered sexual intercourse one of the most pleasurable of all activities. Sexual activity was openly discussed, and every child became knowledgeable about it early. The subject permeated Polynesians' daily discussions just as it did their secular and religious literature. Little children went nude until seven years of age, so knowledge of sexual anatomy was prevalent, and living in close quarters without partitions in their homes provided children an opportunity to observe the act itself. In general, Polynesians regarded sex before marriage as permissible, especially among the common class. Although some members of the society praised the status of chastity, virginity was not a virtue. Daughters of high chiefs, however, were an exception. Virginity among them was almost mandatory.

When the European explorers first visited the islands, the sailing captains called the Polynesian women promiscuous, but their sailing crews usually took advantage of whatever liberties they could with the local women. Women's sexual services were offered to everyone aboard—husbands brought their wives and fathers brought their daughters. At first, the sailors were dumbfounded, but they soon began to appreciate the Polynesian sexual freedoms. At first these services were provided freely, but when the Polynesian women saw the possible gifts

they could earn, they began to demand certain reciprocal donations. In Tahiti, for example, the two most desired gifts were nails and red feathers. Nails left the ships so fast that one sea captain, fearing the destruction of his ship, had to declare it illegal, upon the pain of death, to extract any nails from the boards of the ship! Red feathers, the symbol of royalty and extremely scarce in the islands, were prized as highly as nails, and all ranks of society rushed to obtain them. Captain James Cook, as recorded by the scientist Johann Forster in his *Observations Made during a Voyage round the World* (1778), wrote that no women in the world had such latitudes as they did in Tahiti, and most researchers conclude that the ancient Polynesians spent most of their time arranging, preparing for, or engaging in copulation.

## POLYNESIAN LANGUAGES

Sometime in their remote past and during their migrations into the Pacific, Polynesians most likely spoke a common language that scholars today call Proto-Polynesian. It likewise is part of a much larger language family called Austronesian, one that stretches halfway around the world from Easter Island and Hawai'i in the eastern Pacific, through Indonesia and Southeast Asia, to Madagascar. As the Polynesians migrated eastward, settling the islands in the vast Pacific Ocean, they became separated from one another, and different branches of the Proto-Polynesian language eventually divided into some thirty different spoken dialects of Proto-Polynesian today. The simplified chart in Figure 1.2 shows the relationship of these Polynesian dialects.

Their close relationship is best shown by examining a sample of cognate words in each of the languages. (See Table 1.1 and the Glossary for additional similarities.) Of course, not all words in the languages are similar. The words in Table 1.1 were deliberately chosen, and another chart showing their differences would be equally revealing.

Ancient Polynesians had no written language. Some of the early European explorers to the islands in the late eighteenth century, Captain James Cook and William Bligh, for example, were the first to record some of the Polynesian words as they heard them spoken by the islanders. Without a standard orthography and method of spelling, these explorers would hear the same word but could spell it several different ways, depending upon the native language of the recorder. It wasn't until the arrival of the Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century that a serious attempt was made to standardize the languages and teach the Polynesians to read and write in their own tongue. It was indeed a formidable task, one that had to be repeated in each of the island groups—



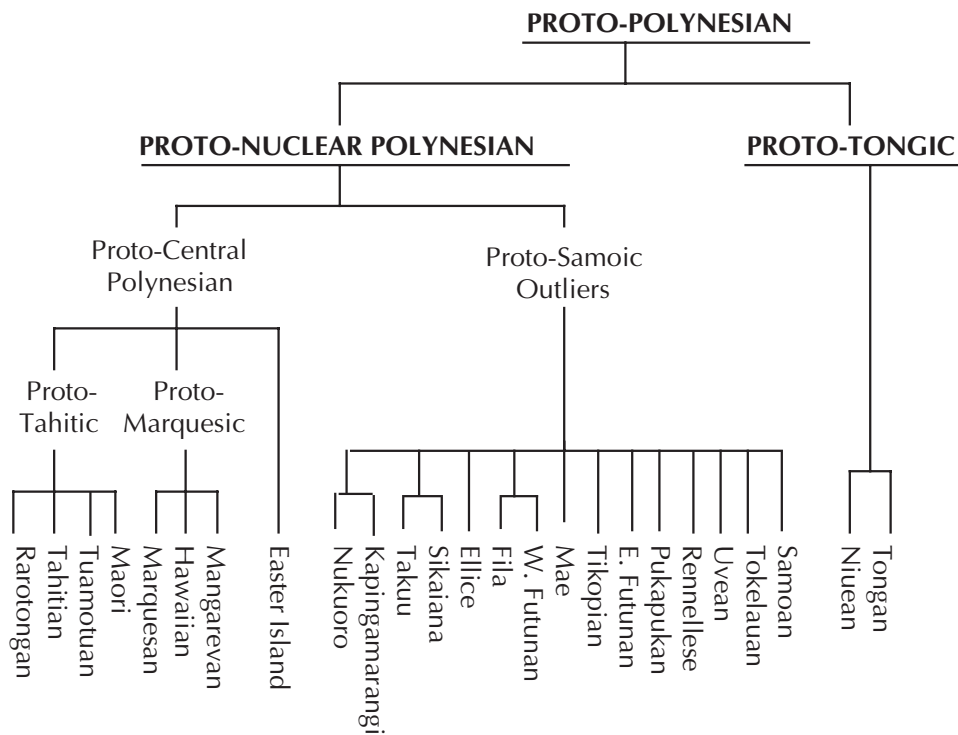


Figure 1.2: Relationship of the Polynesian Languages

Sāmoa, Tonga, Hawai‘i, Tahiti, and so on. After much discussion and scholarly debate, the missionaries decided that the various Polynesian languages could be written in the Roman alphabet and that Latin could provide the basis for the pronunciation. That became the basis for developing the various Polynesian dictionaries and grammar books; however, minor differences in pronunciation from one island group to another caused slight differences in the way words were spelled and/or pronounced. The general Polynesian consonants (b, f, h, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, and w) are pronounced similar to those in English and are always followed by a vowel to make up one syllable. The vowels (a, e, i, o, and u) are pure and pronounced similar to Latin or the Romance languages—Italian, Spanish, French, and so forth. The use of macrons, or the long duration signs over a long vowel (ā, ē, ī, ō, and ū), has become standard within the last thirty years. When the languages were first recorded, the missionaries did not systematically use macrons, and as a result, older texts are frequently difficult to translate because some words may be spelled alike but are pronounced differently as Table 1.2 will show (using Hawaiian as an example).

The diphthongs ae, ai, ao, au, ei, eu, oi, and ou are always stressed on the first letter, and the two vowels are not as closely pronounced as they are in English.



**Table 1.1    Cognate Words in Selected Polynesian Dialects**

English	Tongan	Samoan	Marquesan	Tahitian	Māori	Hawaiian
<b>Ancestor</b>	tupu	tupu	tupuna	tupuna	tupuna	kupuna
<b>Bird</b>	manu	manu	manu	manu	manu	manu
<b>Canoe</b>	vaka	va'a	vaka	va'a	waka	wa'a
<b>Fish</b>	ika	i'a	ika	i'a	ika	i'a
<b>Love</b>	'alo'ofa	alofa	kaoha	āroha	aroha	aloha
<b>Man</b>	tangata	tane	kane	tāne	tane	kāne
<b>Old</b>	tefito	tafito	tehito	tahito	tawhito	kahiko
<b>Six</b>	ono	ono	ono	ono	ono	ono
<b>Taro</b>	talo	talo	kalo	taro	taro	kalo
<b>Woman</b>	feline	fafine	vahine	vahine	whahine	wahine
<b>Yes</b>	'io	ai	ae	'ae	ae	'ae

**Table 1.2    Similar Spellings with Different Pronunciations (Hawaiian)**

**Long duration vowels (indicated by a macron over the vowel)**

ā ... as in "calm"	nānā (look at)
ē ... as in "they"	kēlā (this or that one)
ī ... as in "machine"	pīpī (to sprinkle)
ō ... as in "no"	kōkō (carrying net)
ū ... as in "rule" or "tool"	'ū'ū ( to stammer or stutter)

**Short duration vowels**

a ... as in "above"	hala (sin or offense)
e ... as in "set"	pepe (flat, as a flat nose)
i ... as in "city"	miki (quick, active)
o ... as in "sole"	koko (blood, rainbow-hued)
u ... as in "put"	'u'u (to strip a leaf or hoist a sail)

The glottal stop (') or reverse apostrophe appears before some initial vowels as *'auwē* (Oh!) and between some vowels in words such as *ko'o* (brace, partner) and *ari'i* (chief). The glottal stop is considered a consonant and may be the remnant of a "k" sound that once existed in the ancient Proto-Polynesian language. For example, the Polynesian word for "fish" retains the "k" sound in Tongan, Marquesan, and New Zealand Māori and is spelled *ika*, but in Samoan, Tahitian, and Hawaiian, the lost "k" becomes a glottal stop (') as in *i'a*. Its pronunciation

is best exemplified in the word *o'o* (mature, ripe fruit), which is pronounced like the English phrase "Oh, oh!"

Missionaries in some of the island groups used an isolated consonant "g" for an "ng" sound, pronounced as in the English word "singer." The Samoan Pago Pago is therefore pronounced "Pango Pango," and the god Tagaloa becomes "Tangaloa." Also the "w" and "wh" can cause some confusion. The "w" is normally pronounced similar to the English, but in Hawaiian, a "w" after a, e, and i is usually pronounced like a soft "v." In New Zealand, the "wh" is pronounced *almost* like the English "f." The Māori hero Tāwhaki is pronounced "Tah-fah-kee" and Whiti as "Fee-tee."

Words are pronounced exactly as they are spelled, each letter is pronounced (similar to Spanish, German, and Italian), and each syllable is given the same emphasis and length. The spoken languages of Polynesia are melodious and pleasing to the ear, and even a beginner can recite aloud some of the simple chants and songs fairly accurately.

## POLYNESIAN ORAL LITERATURE

Traditional Polynesian legends were transmitted orally from one generation to another, in a manner similar to the transmission of ancient Hebrew, Greek, Hindu, and German legends before these peoples too had a systematic form of writing. When they were finally written down, they produced some of the finest epics the world has ever known—the biblical stories, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and the *Song of the Niebelungs*. So it was with the Polynesians. When European navigators first came upon these islands of the Pacific, the Polynesians were living in a Stone Age material culture, but their high level of religious and literary life proved to be an enigma to these navigators. The Europeans marveled at the complexity and depth of Polynesian mythology and at Polynesians' remarkable oratory abilities—their ability to communicate effectively in public and to recite (chant) extensive genealogies, prayers, supplications, and stories of their gods, goddesses, and heroes. Some of these stories, we are told, took days to complete. A mere greeting to another could turn into a masterful eulogy and a farewell into a lengthy dirge. Like all other professions, a Polynesian orator only gained that ability through training and experience.

In some areas of Polynesia (Tahiti and New Zealand, for example), special houses of education were established to train pupils in the intellectual arts—genealogies, traditions, religion, agriculture, literary recitation, and composition—and in all the arts and crafts (see the "Schools of Education" entry in

chapter 3). Most of the students, of course, were children of the nobility, and many of them later became priests. There are no references to such schools in Western Polynesia, but in Sāmoa, there was a particular class of society called the talking chiefs who served their superiors as the source of all traditions, genealogies, protocol, and new compositions. These gifted orators often assumed more authority than the high chiefs themselves.

Attached to almost every chief's court was a group of specialists whose sole purpose was to provide entertainment by telling stories, singing songs, playing games, and dancing. In Hawai'i, they were called *māko'u*, and they specialized in all forms of the hula. In the Marquesas, they were called *kaioi* and in Tahiti the *arioi* (see the "Arioi Society" entry in chapter 3). Their rigorous training was extensive and lasted for years because the chants, dances, and other forms of entertainment were long and complicated. These specialists were uniquely honored during their lifetime, and after death they could expect a lovely reward in paradise. The *arioi* traveled from one district to another, entertaining for days (similar to a modern carnival) before moving on to the next district. They were generally lavished with expensive gifts, offered the finest of foods, and given the highest respect.

Almost every member of the nobility participated in the cultural arts, and even the high chiefs were greatly admired for their abilities to sing and dance. The common Polynesian also cultivated the arts. They often memorized the traditional stories and prayers they heard from the official entertainers, and then they would recite them when the professional entertainers were gone. Prayers and supplications to the gods had to be memorized and performed many times a day—when a working tool was taken down to be used or when a canoe was hauled out of the shed to be launched into the bay. Commoners also learned the chants, songs, and dances by imitation, and then they would perform them around the fires in the evenings.

Polynesian oral literature is colorful, appealing, abstract, metaphysical, and complex. It is full of alliteration, parallelism, euphemism, symbolism, contrasting rhythm, stock phrases, and allegory, as well as layers of double and even triple meanings. Polynesians have always been expert at creating puns, and they prefer analogies rather than frank expressions. When we hear the description of a canoe, for example, we are not quite sure whether the poet actually means a canoe or whether he is referring to another object—a phallus, for example. Modern-day Tongans, for example, use a traditional technique called *heliaki*, the hiding of the real meaning in references to natural objects and places. The listeners must always be on the alert for these subtle literary techniques and ask themselves, "Is this exactly what the poet meant?" Established rules also determined

the exact vocabulary, musical pitch, and rhythm for each of the Polynesian chant forms. Footnotes to modern translations of the chants are often double or triple the length of the original chants, and some chants are so obscure that even modern-day Polynesians cannot translate them. There were over a hundred different names for the different forms of the narratives and chants, most of which were divided between the serious—which talk about the creation, gods, demigods, heroes, and important chiefs—and those that are meant to pass the time and entertain.

The exact dating of the ancient chants is forever lost. We can assume, however, that those chants that have facsimiles in several widely scattered island groups had to have been in existence at the time of the Polynesian migrations from a central “motherland” (Hawaiki as the Polynesians called it). The chants extolling the adventures of Māui, Tāwhaki, and Rata, for example, must have been extremely ancient because their legendary narratives are found throughout all of Polynesia. The Eastern Polynesians must have brought the chants with them as they pushed out from Sāmoa into the vast areas of the eastern Pacific. Local stories that have no repetition elsewhere are perhaps more modern in origin, but it is still impossible to date them. Essentially, we can only divide Polynesian traditions and history into (1) prehistory, or pre-European, and (2) historical, or post-European. Modern scholars try to keep the two separate so that they can describe more accurately what Polynesian culture was like prior to the coming of the Europeans and before it was drastically changed by modern society. By the middle of the nineteenth century, for example, scholars and writers in the islands were already lamenting that the current generation hardly understood the old ways. They complained, too, that the children could hardly understand the language of their grandparents, even though they were speaking the same native tongue.

The cause of much of this loss of culture was of course the introduction of a forceful and aggressive white culture and an uncompromising religion—Christianity. The introduction of the use of iron, for example, drastically changed the whole way the old culture created material objects. A simple nail transformed building construction overnight, and the old died away; in one swoop again, the iron ax shattered the use of the stone adz with its crude cutting techniques, and the old died away. For better or worse, the traditional art forms were drastically changed by the newcomers to the islands.

To make matters even worse, the early Christian missionaries destroyed the old “pagan” ways and material objects, and in some of the islands, they eventually forbade the use of the native languages in their schools and churches. It is indeed surprising that, with such a formidable opposition, the traditional

languages and cultures survived at all, but some did. We cannot even begin to estimate the numbers of ancient stories that were lost along the way.

## RECORDED TEXTS

Chronologically, the collection and publication of Polynesian mythological texts falls into four major periods. The first period begins with the first Western explorers to the islands, generally in the late eighteenth century, and continues until the establishment of Christianity. During this first period, explorers, such as Captain James Cook, published bits and pieces of information they gleaned from their contact with the islanders. Their primary purpose was not necessarily to gain anthropological or mythological information, but to explore for political and economic reasons. Cook's later voyages, of course, brought numerous scientists and artists to the islands with him, and we are richer as a result of their descriptions of the society and material culture. Here again, only a few references to religion and mythology were recorded, and we must scan page after page of their journals to glean any mythological names or references. During this time, however, several beachcombers arrived in the islands (William Mariner in Sāmoa, for example), and some of them recorded their impressions and narratives, leaving us with a few additional scraps of data on religion and mythology.

It wasn't until the second period—the arrival of the Christian missionaries—that any serious attempt was made to record what the outsiders discovered about the ancient beliefs of the islanders. The main purpose of the missionaries, of course, was to wipe out all traces of pagan beliefs and convert the “heathens” to Western Christianity—in most cases, to Protestantism. Idols and images were burned, temples ransacked and overturned, and any traces of the ancient chants and dances forbidden to be performed in public. A few of the missionaries, however, took it upon themselves to write details about the islands in order to interest the general public back home to support these the far-flung missions halfway around the world. Prominent among these early writers was the Reverend William Ellis (1794–1872) of the London Missionary Society, who spent 6 years in Tahiti (1816–1822) and 2 years in Hawai'i. He introduced the first printing press to the islands and gathered extensive ethnographic data that were published after his return to England. His *Polynesian Researches* (2 vols. 1829) and his *Journal of a Tour around Hawaii* (1825) are valuable reference works on the Society and Hawaiian Islands. But like the explorers' journals, there are only a sprinkling of references to the ancient chants in his works. Ellis's influence in Hawai'i, however, led to the establishment of a school in Lahainaluna, Māui, by the Reverend

Sheldon Dibble, whose purpose was to educate Hawaiian students to write about their old culture. Two of his most famous students were David Malo (1795–1853) and Samuel M. Kamakau (1815–1876), whose writings were published in the Hawaiian newspapers between 1866 and 1871. Kamakau's articles were later collected, translated, and published in *The Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii* (1961) and in *Ka Po'e Kahiko: The People of Old* (1964). Other early missionaries whose writings became famous are John M. Orsmond (1788–1856), whose granddaughter, Teuira Henry, edited his voluminous manuscript *Ancient Tahiti* and published it only in 1928. About half of the book's 651 pages contains chants and legends, in Tahitian and English, relating to ancient mythology. In Sāmoa, the missionary George A. Turner (1818–1891) spent 19 years in the island and published 2 works—*Nineteen Years in Polynesia* (1861) and *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before* (1884)—which became the standard references to the Sāmoa's ancient religion and customs. One of the finest collections of all early works on Mangaia (Cook Islands) is that of the Reverend William Wyatt Gill (1828–1896), who spent 20 years on Mangaia where he learned the language and collected traditional stories. Although freely translated to make them comprehensible to the English reader, his published work, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific* (1876), continues to be one of the finest sources of traditional folklore.

Not long after the missionaries arrived in the islands, there was an influx of colonial settlers and administrators. Most of the latter regarded island traditions and languages as inferior and unimportant. A few, however, believed that a thorough and careful study of the language and customs was needed to do one's job effectively. Sir George Grey (1812–1898), governor of New Zealand (from 1845–1854 and 1861–1867) and premier (from 1877–1879), learned the language and systematically collected myths and legends from the elders and high-ranking Māoris. His published work, *Polynesian Mythology* (1855), became a milestone in Polynesian research. It was the first book devoted entirely to the compilation, in both English and the native language, of myths from any Polynesian group. Despite the fact that his English translations are faulted and mistranslated to please his English-speaking audience, the book still remains a classic. (The entire book is currently found on the Internet at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pac/grey/index.htm>.) It also inspired others throughout the Pacific to publish similar works. In New Zealand, Grey's associate John White published a six-volume edition of *The Ancient History of the Maori* (1887–1891), gleaned from many sources, and Elsdon Best (1856–1931) published more than twenty-five books and fifty papers dealing with the Māori people and customs. Also honored for his timely devotion to Māori culture was Edward Tregear (1846–1931), whose dictionary and *The Māori Race* (1904) serve as a substantial guide to Māori customs and mythology.

New Zealand was not the only island group to be blessed with scholars interested in recording ancient folklore. Hawai'i provided a close second. In 1888, Rollin M. Daggett, United States minister to the Hawaiian Islands, compiled and edited a similar volume to Grey's, supposedly written by King Kalākaua (reigned 1874–1891), entitled *The Legends and Myths of Hawai'i* and consisting of over five hundred pages. Most prominent among Hawaiian publishers is Abraham Fornander (1812–1887), whose three-volume work *An Account of the Polynesian Race* (1878–1885) and his three-volume *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folklore* (1916–1920) are considered the greatest repertory of Hawaiian folklore. Thomas G. Thrum (1842–1932) published an annual almanac that included numerous Hawaiian tales and folklore. He compiled them into two volumes, *Hawaiian Folk Tales* in 1907 and *More Hawaiian Folk Tales* in 1923.

In Sāmoa, several prominent German colonial administrators were also collecting and publishing texts at the same time as those in New Zealand and Hawai'i. (Germany administered the western Samoan islands as a colony from 1899 to 1914.) Werner von Bülow and Otto Stübel published numerous myths in several scholarly journals during the 1890s, and Augustin Krämer, a medical doctor who served four years in the Pacific and then returned again to gather scientific and ethnographical information, published two massive volumes entitled *Die Samoa-Inseln* in 1902 and 1903. Fortunately for English readers, a translation was finally published in 1994–1995 by the University of Hawai'i Press.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a scientific revolution that had begun earlier created a body of new, professional scholars who were university trained and whose work in various subjects led to the development of several new disciplines in the social sciences, including sociology and anthropology. Up until then, scholars who had collected Polynesian data had done so without the precise, critical, and scientific method that now dominates the field. With the turn of the twentieth century, we see an ever-increasing number of professional anthropologists interested in the cultures of the Pacific. Katherine Luomala, one of the most respected folklorists of the twentieth century, suggests that it was Roland Dixon's publication *Oceanic Mythology* (one volume in the *Mythologies of All Races* series) in 1916 that ushered in this third period (Luomala 1955, 432). His volume was one of the first to do any comparative, critical study of the Pacific islands narratives. Dixon's book ends with thirty-three pages of notes that discuss the probable origin of some of the narratives and the evidence for their diffusion.

Not long after, in 1919, appeared what could also be considered a landmark in the beginning of the third period—the publication of the *Hawaiian Romance*



of *Laieikawai with Introduction and Translation* by Martha Beckwith (d. 1959). Beckwith collected the fragments of the story from the various Hawaiian-language newspapers, translated them, and then added a scholarly introduction on the Polynesian literary style with notes and a summary of various other myths. The romance was published in a scholarly journal and as such was intended primarily for scholars. Working through the Folklore Foundation of Vassar College, Beckwith pioneered the way with her other ethnographic publications in the twentieth century—her translations of *Kepelino's Traditions of Hawai'i* (1932), *The Kumulipo: A Hawaiian Creation Chant* (1951), and Kamakau's *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii* (1961). Her classic work, *Hawaiian Mythology*, appeared in 1940, and it has gone through numerous reprintings both in hardback and paperback editions. Its title is misleading because the volume includes vast details of comparative studies between Hawaiian mythology and the mythology of other island groups in Polynesia.

It was only appropriate that Beckwith's colleague, Katharine Luomala, be chosen to write an introduction to the volume when it was reprinted in 1969. I first met Katharine years ago while I was editor of the journal *Pacific Studies* at the Institute for Polynesian Studies in Hawai'i. We would often meet in her office on the University of Hawai'i campus and discuss the status of current ethnographic research throughout the Pacific. She allowed me to go through her extensive file of notes and materials to see what she had collected throughout her career. My ulterior motive in all of this, of course, was to encourage her to write an article for our new fledgling journal. The net result, however, was the completion of an unpublished manuscript, her *Hula Ki'i: Hawaiian Puppetry*. She finished the manuscript, and the institute published the book in 1984 in cooperation with the University of Hawai'i Press.

Luomala had a gift not only for precise, scholarly research but also for the ability to write with such elegant flair. Her best work, I believe, is her paperback volume *Voices on the Wind* (1955), and my interest and love of Polynesian mythology dates from having read this exquisite volume when I first moved to Hawai'i in the mid-1960s. I highly recommend *Voices on the Wind* as the single most entertaining book on the subject.

Other areas of the Pacific benefited from this modern, twentieth-century era of research and writing. Some of the island groups, which had lacked an ethnographer or anthropologist before, were now visited, and their stories told. The first ethnographer to visit the Marquesas Islands, for example, was the German scholar Karl von den Steinen, whose collection of myths (1897) was published posthumously in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* (Berlin) between 1933 and 1934. The Marquesas Islands, of course, were the first Polynesian islands to be visited by any European explorer (Mendaña in 1595), but



they were never visited again until the nineteenth century. Warfare, alcohol, and Western diseases decimated the population, and by 1920 there were only 1,500 Marquesans left from an estimated population of 100,000 in 1774. Not only a population was decimated, but a whole culture vanished almost overnight. Fortunately, the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum sponsored an expedition to the islands in 1920 to collect whatever it could. E. S. Craghill Handy and his wife, Willowdean Chatterton Handy, published the results of that expedition in their volume *Marquesan Legends* in 1930. Hawaiian scholar Samuel Elbert visited the islands again between 1934 and 1935 and added 50 new legends to that body of literature. The translated legends (341 pages), however, still lie in the Bishop Museum archives, unpublished, but available for research on microfiche.

The major collection of Tongan tales and myths came only in the twentieth century as well. Until then, the two-volume journal of Will Mariner, beachcomber in Tonga from 1806 to 1810, provided the primary source for early Tongan society, government, religious beliefs, and customs. Between 1920 and 1921, Edward W. Gifford worked as an ethnographer in the islands for the Bishop Museum. His monograph, *Tongan Myths and Tales*, was printed in 1924. The Reverend Ernest E. V. Collocott collected his *Tales and Poems of Tonga* shortly thereafter, and they were published by the museum in 1928.

Another collection of legends was printed in that same year. That volume included the collected tales of Johannes C. Andersen, a Dane who immigrated to New Zealand and became the librarian of the Alexander Turnbull Library. He served as editor of its prestigious journal, the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, between 1925 and 1947. From this position, he gained access to hundreds of myths and legends that had been printed in the journal as well as those manuscript copies in the library. His work, *Myths and Legends of the Polynesians*, very much like that of Luamala's *Voices on the Wind*, is written in such a vibrant and interesting style that it has been reprinted several times, the last in 1995. It is also a highly recommended book to read on Polynesian mythology.

As suggested above, Hawai'i and New Zealand have enjoyed a fairly larger cadre of scholars who have advanced folklore studies in their respective island groups over the past century. The influence of Western advanced education may have been one of the catalysts for such a development, because until only recently, Hawai'i and New Zealand were the only two Polynesian island groups that afforded any university training and education. Their stronger economic bases also allowed for the development of libraries and research institutes with the main purpose of gathering ethnographic and cultural data not only in their own islands but throughout all of Polynesia. The result, of course, has been that

scholars in Hawai'i and New Zealand have gathered and published a greater number of texts than exist regarding most of the other islands, upon which some inhabitants live at the absolute subsistence level. Most studies of Polynesian mythology, this one included, unfortunately are influenced by the availability of texts. We must remember as well that it was only in 1998 that the first oral traditions from the island of Anuta (a Polynesian outlier in the Solomons) were published by anthropologist Richard Feinberg. (These "historical" texts from Anuta were not available to me when my previous book on mythology was published in 1989, and Anuta's mythological texts have yet to be published.)

The collecting of original sources is pretty much over. The old generation died a hundred years ago. Scholars would be very suspect if any supposedly "original" story might appear today in any of the island groups. What stories are believed among Polynesians today are generally those once gleaned from one of the collections discussed above. If so, then, what is left for the scholar to do? Unfortunately, many of the older texts are deficient, and better and more accurate editing and publishing of the original texts need to be done. Despite the great work done by the earlier translators, their works need to be edited—rechecked, corrected where needed, and prepared for republication. Sensitive and exceptional narrators are needed to retell these ancient stories in our modern languages so that they may reach a much wider audience. Some of these should be in the form of children's books, so that the new generation may grow up exposed to the rich cultural heritage of Polynesia. Also, the Internet provides a wonderful tool for disseminating knowledge around the world, and it would be fairly easy for a group of individuals to post the full texts of the Polynesian myths on Web pages so that they might be available for interested readers. A few such Web pages do exist, but nothing in comparison to what could be done.

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAND NATIONS

For over two thousand years, Polynesians developed their highly sophisticated and complex Neolithic cultures in relative isolation. Chinese and/or Japanese ships may have sailed through Polynesian waters in ancient times, but there is no compelling evidence to prove it. Ferdinand Magellan was the first European to cross the Pacific (in 1519 to 1521), but it wasn't until 1595 that the Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendaña became the first European explorer to land on a Polynesian island—the Marquesas. Fighting broke out between the two groups, and Mendaña wantonly slaughtered over two hundred Marquesans, even though the

Spanish acknowledged them as being friendly and gentle. For over two hundred years after that, only a few Polynesians ever actually saw or met a European, despite the fact that numerous European explorers were sent out to “discover and claim” new lands in the Pacific, and it took over three hundred years before Western explorers and scientists had actually mapped the whole of Polynesia.

The goals of the early Portuguese and Spanish explorers were to find a profitable sea route to the spice islands in the western Pacific, to explore and seize whatever riches they could in the Americas, to find new lands that they could claim as their own, and to determine whether the “*Terra Australis Incognita*” lay in the South Pacific. The *Terra Australis Incognita* was the name used to denote a hypothesized large continent that European explorers believed had to exist in the South Pacific in order to balance the landmasses in the northern hemisphere. Spain so dominated the exploration of the Pacific during the sixteenth century that, for almost a hundred years after, the Pacific Ocean was popularly referred to as “The Spanish Lake.” But still, no Polynesian islands had been “discovered” by the Europeans, because most of the trade that the Spanish developed in the Pacific bypassed Polynesia.

The defeat of the Spanish armada by the English in 1588 signaled the collapse of Spanish influence throughout Europe and the Pacific. The Netherlands proclaimed their independence from the Spanish in 1581, and the first Dutch ship sailed into the Pacific via the Cape of Good Hope in 1596. The Dutch East India Company was formed in 1602, and it sent out ships to explore and to add to its profits. In 1642, Abel Janszoon Tasman briefly stopped in New Zealand and Tonga, and his countryman Jacob Roggeveen landed on Easter Island (*Rapanui*) on Easter Day in 1722; by that time, however, the era of Dutch exploration was over, and very little scientific knowledge of the Polynesian people had yet been recorded.

It was the Seven Years’ War in Europe (1756–1763) that brought France and Great Britain into competition for overseas exploration. The war also inaugurated an era of scientific exploration, the recording of ethnic data for the Pacific islanders, and the arrival of Western immigrants on the islands. From about 1760 to 1810, the British explorers James Cook, Samuel Wallis, and William Bligh, and the French explorers Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, Jean-François de Lapérouse, and Jean de Surville extended Europe’s knowledge of the geography of the Pacific and more specifically its knowledge of the ancient Polynesian cultures. By the end of the period, there was little left to record about the geography of the Pacific, while at the same time, the cultures of the Pacific peoples had been forever changed. The introduction of European artifacts—iron and guns, for example—and diseases, unknown before in Polynesia, reduced Polynesian culture to a shadow of its former self.

Before moving on to the history of the various Polynesian island groups, a word must be said about the most famous of all Pacific explorers—British Captain James Cook (1728–1779). His achievements are unparalleled in Pacific exploration, and he has been rightly called the greatest explorer of his age. Between 1768 and his death in 1779, he circled the globe three times and “discovered” for the Europeans the various islands and cultures of the Pacific. He was the first European to “discover” Hawai‘i, Christmas Island, New Caledonia, the Cook Islands, the Gilbert Islands, part of the Tuamotus, Fiji, and the Tongan Islands. Although the Marquesas, the Solomons, and Easter Island had been visited by Europeans before, it was Captain Cook who correctly placed them on the map so that they could be visited again. He proved the nonexistence of the great unknown southern continent (the *Terra Australis Incognita*), that New Guinea and Australia were not part of the same landmass, that New Zealand consisted of two main islands and was not part of Australia, and that an antiscorbutic diet prevented scurvy. He also discovered the Antarctic. He met his death in Hawai‘i on 14 February 1779, during a skirmish that broke out between his men and the followers of Chief Kalani‘ōpu‘u on the Big Island of Hawai‘i. He was buried at sea a few days later, and today a white marker on the shore of Kealahou Bay marks the site of his death. Even after two hundred years, no one can visit the Pacific without seeing the hand of Cook everywhere.

## The Cook Islands

Archeological evidence shows that the first immigrants to what is currently called the Cook Islands came from the Marquesas, and later oral traditions tell us that invaders from Tahiti and Sāmoa briefly conquered them in the thirteenth century. The cultures of the various Cook Islands differed slightly one from another, but Rarotonga came to dominate much of the history of the Cook Islands because that island contained the largest population.

In early modern times (1606), Spanish navigator Pedro Quirós was the first foreigner to visit the islands, but it was Captain Cook who explored and mapped them extensively during his visits in the 1770s. The first European immigrants came in 1821 with the arrival of the Christian missionaries, headed by Englishman John Williams and supported by Papehia, a Polynesian missionary from nearby Rā‘iatea (French Polynesia). By 1827, Papehia, who had by this time married the high chief’s daughter, had converted most of the people to Protestant Christianity. A wholesale restructuring of island cultures brought about Christian legal codes, village and island organizations, Bible schools

(English language), foreign trade, and, of course, more immigrants who brought with them their foreign and undesirable influences.

Anciently, the Cook Islands never developed a single ruler (king or queen) over their entire group of thirteen inhabited islands (as occurred in Hawai'i, Tahiti, and Tonga), although in the late nineteenth century, "Queen" Makea Takau dominated affairs around the growing town of Avarua on Rarotonga. In 1888, an imminent threat of a French invasion convinced Makea and the Council of Ariki (chiefs) to call upon the English government for protection. An English protectorate was established in October, and in 1901, the islands were officially annexed to the British Empire and placed within the governmental jurisdiction of New Zealand. Another wholesale reorganization of the islands' government ensued. The traditional courts and councils were abolished, and New Zealanders took charge of the islands' government and finance through an appointed resident commissioner.

Many of the paramount chiefs disliked the changes. When Resident Commissioner Colonel W. E. Gudgeon retired in 1909, reaction to his stern measures was swift in coming. A New Zealand investigation team visited the islands, and in 1915, a Cook Islands Act was passed that codified many of the laws. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, dissatisfaction with New Zealand control never subsided. During World War II (1939–1945), U.S. soldiers stationed in the Cook Islands openly accused New Zealand of neglecting the islands, and the dissatisfaction led to the development of several Cook Island nationalist groups both in the islands and in New Zealand. Violent clashes broke out between the groups and the New Zealand government, and finally the New Zealand government proposed some sort of independence for the islands. A legislative council was formed in 1946, with more authority by 1957, and by 1964 a new constitution was promulgated that gave the Cook Islands internal self-government in a free association with New Zealand rather than total independence. New Zealand was to provide financial assistance, defense, and support in external affairs, and the Cook Islanders would retain their New Zealand citizenship.

The current Cook Islands parliamentary form of government consists of a prime minister, eight ministers responsible to Parliament (made up of twenty-five members elected every five years), and an advisory Council of Ariki (consisting of fifteen hereditary chiefs).

## **French Polynesia**

Although the English were the first to dominate modern Tahitian history (1767–1847), it was the French who eventually gained colonial control of Tahiti

and its neighboring islands. British explorer Samuel Wallis first landed on Tahiti in 1767 and claimed the islands for the British crown. Frenchmen Louis-Antoine de Bougainville landed shortly thereafter and did the same for the French. After their visits to the islands, Bougainville and Captain Cook published vivid accounts of the lush islands and their warm, friendly people, and as a result, the islands, especially the island of Tahiti with its port Pape'ete, became favorite stopovers for the ships crossing the Pacific. Neither France nor Great Britain, however, pressed territorial claims for the islands until well into the nineteenth century.

In the meantime, Pomare, the senior ranking chief on the island of Tahiti, began exerting his influence over all the other chiefs, and with the arrival of the English Protestant missionaries in 1797, he was recognized as the "king of Tahiti." His dynasty, similar to the one in Hawai'i, ruled a quasi-independent kingdom until the late nineteenth century. Tahiti's most well-known sovereign, Queen Pomare IV, reigned from 1824 to 1877, during which she saw drastic changes to her island kingdom.

For example, the English missionaries influenced the early Pomares to establish law codes that coincided with their Protestant religious beliefs. The Law Code of Pomare I (1819) became the first indigenous law code throughout all of Polynesia. Subsequent laws codified the Ten Commandments and forbade alcohol and prostitution, both of which had been unbridled during the early whaling days in Tahiti. Traditional singing and dancing were also prohibited. Before being converted to Christianity, Queen Pomare had opposed the missionaries' influence and frequently went into hiding to practice the old ways. By the mid-1830s, however, the queen had been converted and was setting a righteous influence upon her subjects. Pape'ete became a booming port town where thousands of foreign whaling ships anchored each year in order to refurbish their ships, gain fresh provisions, and let their crews relax in the casual atmosphere of Polynesia.

Conflict between the English and the French came about in 1836, when two French Roman Catholic missionaries attempted to land and proselytize the islands. The Protestant-dominated government opposed such religious diversity in the islands, and there followed years of intrigue and war that eventually led to a French Protectorate being established in 1847. The queen was allowed to continue her rule, but actual control was in the hands of the French. The queen died in 1877, and her indebted son, Pomare V, willingly handed over his kingdom to France for payment of his debts and a pension for life. The islands of French Polynesia (the Society Islands, the Marquesas, the Gambiers, the Australs, and Rapa) formed French Oceania, and a French governor was sent from Paris to Pape'ete to administer the islands.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the islands languished under colonial neglect and because of their distance from Europe. Foreign immigration was minimal, and as a result, over 80 percent of the islands today remains Polynesian, and Protestantism remains the dominant religion in the region despite the influence of French Catholicism. During the 1930s, worldwide interest in the islands grew as a result of the Hollywood movies *Taboo* (1928) and *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1934) and from the first shipload of California tourists in 1934.

During World War II, French Polynesia joined General de Gaulle's Free French movement and sent three hundred volunteers to join Free French forces in North Africa. Like many other colonial subjects after the war, French Polynesians were no longer content to remain loyal and obedient under French rule. Since that time, the islanders have gained considerable internal autonomy without severing all of their ties with France. They have accomplished this through a combination of violent demonstrations and strikes as well as peaceful negotiations. Internal autonomy was granted in 1977, and additional freedoms were gained in a new statue in 1984. Since then, island politics have been complex and unpredictable. French nuclear tests in the Pacific brought prosperity to the small nation through outright grants to the government and employment of the islanders. The tests have also created an economic dependency upon France that most islanders are now unwilling to relinquish. Charismatic personalities dominate the political scene, and as a result, French Polynesian politics are far from dull. French support, Tahiti's tourism, its black pearl industry, and its exports have created one of the highest standards of living anywhere in Polynesia (outside of New Zealand).

## **Hawai'i**

The Hawaiian Islands lie in the North Pacific, far from their Polynesian neighbors in the south, and for that reason, they were some of the last islands to be settled by Polynesians. A group of immigrants from the Marquesas settled there about A.D. 650, but the main wave of immigrants came from Tahiti approximately A.D. 1200. In isolation for over six hundred years, the Hawaiians developed a complex society and culture based upon subsistence and fishing. The islands were ruled by a hierarchy of high chiefs and subordinate chiefs, and by the time Captain Cook, in 1778, visited the islands, several of the high-ranking chiefs had begun to exert their influence over their surrounding islands.

Shortly after Cook's last visit (1779), High Chief Kamehameha expanded his rule from the Big Island and unified the remaining islands under a single



sovereign. His family ruled the islands as an independent monarchy until it was overthrown by a revolution in 1893. Similar to the other Polynesian islands in the nineteenth century, Hawai'i experienced drastic changes in every aspect of its society and culture. Unlike the islands in the South Pacific, which were Christianized by European missionaries, Hawai'i was converted by Calvinist missionaries from Boston who arrived there in 1820. Gaining support of the royal family, the missionaries introduced Christian laws that were to govern society. Traditional customs, religion, and entertainment, including music and dance, were forbidden. The early missionaries, however, retained Hawaiian as one of the languages of instruction in their new schools. So vigorous was the educational system, that by midcentury, Hawai'i boasted a higher literacy rate than many of the developed nations in the world.

The booming whaling industry and Hawai'i's strategic location in the North Pacific brought other foreign interests to the islands. France and Great Britain saw the opportunity to press their imperial claims similar to their actions in Tahiti. Fearing a French takeover in 1843, Captain George Paulet seized the islands for Great Britain, but his actions were disavowed by the British parliament, and Rear Admiral Richard Thomas sailed to Hawai'i to restore the independence of the Hawaiian monarchy. By 1850, the Hawaiians were being threatened by foreign immigration—settlers from the United States and sugar plantation workers being imported from China (1865), Japan (1868), and Portugal (1878). By the late nineteenth century, foreign immigration and diseases had decimated the Hawaiian population, and they now found themselves minorities in their own land.

Meanwhile, American businessmen were concerned about the instability of the Hawaiian monarchy and called for change. A palace revolution on 17 January 1893 overthrew Queen Lili'uokalani and installed an American-dominated republican government headed by Sanford B. Dole, its new president. The new republic pressed for U.S. annexation of the islands. At first the U.S. government refused, but by 1898 Congress was convinced that it should, whereupon it passed a bill that formally annexed the islands in 1900. Consequently, Hawai'i became a U.S. territory and Dole its first appointed governor.

In the first half of the twentieth century, sugar production boomed, plantation owners gained control over the economy, the Republican Party dominated politics, and organized labor began flexing its muscles in the workforce. Similar to other Pacific island nations, World War II was a major turning point in Hawaiian history. American attention was turned directly to the islands after the Japanese bombing on 7 December 1941 because hundreds of thousands of American GIs were stationed in Hawai'i or they passed through Honolulu on their way to other Pacific ports. Hawaiians troops showed their loyalty to the



United States by performing admirably in the European fronts, but when they returned home, they were less reluctant to be as docile as they had been before the war.

By 1946, organized labor had become a formidable force in the islands. Its support of the Democratic Party and the power it wielded influenced Congress to admit Hawai'i as a state on 21 August 1959. Its first elected governor was William F. Quinn, Hawai'i's only elected Republican governor; all subsequent governors have been Democrats. Statehood and the development of the airline industry brought the islands closer to the U.S. mainland, and as a result, booming population has brought major social and economic problems to the islands. It has also resulted in the destruction of much of the natural beauty of the islands. High-rises, condominiums, housing developments, and hotels have all eaten away at the land. Although the per capita income is about the same as on the U.S. mainland, the cost of living in Hawai'i is approximately 34 percent higher. The indigenous Hawaiian population presses for recognition and retribution for past acts by the state of Hawai'i and the U.S. federal government. Taken together, all of these developments have caused major problems for the government in the area of land use, population density, and water.

## **New Zealand**

In some ways, New Zealand history is similar to that of Hawai'i. Both island groups were incorporated into foreign powers—Great Britain and the United States, respectively. Their indigenous peoples became minorities within their own countries, their native languages (Māori and Hawaiian) almost became extinct, and yet today, they have the highest standards of living of any other Polynesian island nation.

The Māoris of New Zealand trace their history back to a mythical land called Hawaiki, which may have been the Society Islands (Tahiti), the Cook Islands, or the Marquesas. Various waves of Māoris arrived in huge, double-hulled canoes between A.D. 800 and 1200. They brought with them their Eastern Polynesian culture, but unique to the Māoris were their tattoo designs, their artifacts carved from greenstone (jade), their elaborately carved meeting houses and canoes, and their unique flax-constructed clothing.

Captain James Cook visited the islands between 1769 and 1774; he charted the island chain and took possession of it for Great Britain. The vast size of the islands (larger than all of the other Polynesian islands combined) allowed for foreign exploitation of the island resources—seals, whales, timber, and flax. British

dealers set up stations around the islands and entered into a brisk trade with New South Wales (Australia). Wesleyan missionaries arrived in 1814 under the direction of the Reverend Samuel Marsden and later under William Williams. They learned the Māori language and established schools and literacy in the islands. The Roman Catholics arrived in 1838. All was accomplished, of course, with the destruction of the ancient ways of living and the introduction of Western and Christian ideals.

The early introduction of firearms also proved to be destructive to the Māoris. Tribe fought against tribe as the population became decimated. During the 1830s, British settlers from New South Wales poured into the islands as a result of poor economic conditions in Australia. Threatened by possible French competition for the islands, the British hurriedly founded settlements throughout the islands, and Captain William Hobson of the British government arrived and proclaimed jurisdiction over the islands. He summoned the Māori chiefs to a meeting on 6 February 1840, at which time they mutually signed the famous Treaty of Waitangi. New Zealand became a crown colony the next year with Auckland designated its administrative center.

Continual immigration from Australia created the need to lease lands from the Māori for the settlers' large sheep farms. Demands by the growing British population led to the establishment of self-government in 1852. The government consisted of a governor appointed from London, a legislative council (selected by the governor), and a house of representatives (elected by the people).

Economic depressions in the late nineteenth century led to the establishment of a progressive liberal government that passed legislation to provide better factory conditions, shorter hours, old-age pensions, and workmen's compensation—one of the first countries in the world to do so. New Zealand also was the first country in the world to give women the right to vote (1893).

During World War I (1914–1918), New Zealand willingly contributed 100,000 troops to the war effort in Europe, and an era of prosperity followed. Immigration continued, and by 1930, New Zealand's population numbered 1.65 million. The Great Depression (1929–1935), however, caused widespread unrest and brought to power the Labour Party, which inaugurated wide social reforms including free medical assistance and an increase in old-age pensions. When World War II broke out (1939), New Zealand rallied to Britain's side once again while the Labour Party continued its strict control over the economy. In 1949, the rising National Party (anti-Labour) came to power and has dominated New Zealand politics ever since. Currently, Māoris make up approximately 16 per cent of the total population (3.8 million) of New Zealand, and a resurgence in their traditional past has resulted in a more politically active Māori population.

## Sāmoa

The Samoan islands are among the most ancient of all Polynesia. These South Pacific islands were settled by 1000 B.C. by Lapita colonists who came from either Tonga or Fiji. The colonists created a highly complex and unique culture in these islands. They lived in scattered valleys and costal homesteads rather than villages and were engaged in full-fledged Polynesian horticulture, including the storage of breadfruit in underground pits. They developed a unique governmental structure—their *matai* (chiefly titles) were not necessarily handed down from father to son, and in some instances, they could be divided and distributed to two or more recipients. Samoans were also responsible for the first exploration and settling of the islands to their east—the Marquesas, the Society Islands, and the Cook Islands, for example. The fact that many of the Eastern Polynesian myths tell of an ancient Hawaiki (Havai'i, etc.) suggests that perhaps the Samoan island of Savai'i may have been their homeland.

French explorer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville was the first European explorer to land on the Samoan islands (1787), and he lost twelve of his men in a scuffle that broke out between them and the Samoans. Very little is known about the islands until the arrival of the Christian missionaries from London in 1830 under the leadership of John Williams. By 1840, most Samoans had been converted. Meanwhile, a reciprocal commercial agreement was signed between the Samoan chiefs and the British captain Bethune of the *HMS Conway*. This led the way to an expansion of trade between Sāmoa and the Europeans while at the same time affording the Samoans “protection” from other outsiders. The German firm of Godeffroy and Sons opened a plantation store in Āpia in 1855, and copra (dried coconut meat) became their main export item. The U.S. Central Polynesian Land and Commercial Company and the German Godeffroys bought up vast stretches of lands and planted them with coconut trees.

U.S. interest in the islands came about as a result of Captain Charles Wilkes's expedition to the South Pacific (from 1838 to 1842). After making a survey of the islands, Wilkes signed a contract with the Samoan chiefs for the use of the excellent harbor at Pago Pago on the island of Tutuila. Meanwhile, High Chief Mālietoa Vai'inupo failed in his attempt to consolidate all of the chiefs under his control. Upon his death in 1841, his chiefly titles were divided, and the islands witnessed over twenty years of internal civil war.

Meanwhile, the islands' businesses in copra and whaling brought in numerous immigrants who generally settled in and around the growing town of Āpia. German, British, and American competition for control of the islands came to a climax in March 1889 when warships from all three nations lay in Āpia harbor with their guns pointed at each other. A hurricane on 16 March damaged many

of the ships, and over two hundred lost their lives. By June, however, a Berlin Act provided for a tripartite condominium rule for the islands, but by December 1899 even that had ended in failure. Britain withdrew her interests in Sāmoa (for control elsewhere), and Germany and the United States divided the islands between them. The United States assumed control over the eastern islands—Tuvalu and the Manu'a group, subsequently called American Sāmoa—and Germany received the western islands—Savai'i and 'Upolu, subsequently called Western Sāmoa until 1997 at which time it reverted to its old name of simply Sāmoa.

## American Sāmoa

In an agreement with Samoan chiefs in 1900, the eastern islands became an unincorporated and unorganized territory of the United States. From 1900 to 1951, administration of the islands fell under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Navy, after which it fell to the Department of the Interior. Very few foreigners ever immigrated to these islands (as well as the western Samoan islands), and as a result, the Samoan way of life (*fa'aSāmoa*) changed very little. In the 1960s, however, international criticism of U.S. neglect of the islands led Congress to appropriate extensive sums of money for the economic and political development of American Sāmoa. A new constitution was created in 1960 that provided for an elected governor and legislature, and subsequent plebiscites have resulted in the islands retaining their current political status with the United States. Currently, the American Samoan government relies heavily upon appropriations granted to it from the U.S. government in Washington, D.C.

## Sāmoa (“Western Sāmoa” from 1890 to 1997)

After the division of the islands in 1890, differences over the position of “king” caused civil war to break out again among the Samoans, while at the same time the Samoans became disgruntled with German rule. A revolt (Mau of Pule) broke out in 1908, but it was squashed by the German governor, Wilhelm Solf, who took punitive measures against its leaders. When World War I broke out in 1914, New Zealand forces quickly landed in the islands and seized them from the Germans. New Zealand control (from 1914 to 1962) was disliked as much as the German control. The revolutionary movement (Mau) continued against the New Zealand government until 1936, when the New Zealand Labour Party came to power and made peace with the Samoan dissidents. U.S. soldiers

stationed in Western Sāmoa during World War II introduced the islanders to a more advanced, industrialized society. Afterward, world sentiment and the growing desire of Samoans to become autonomous led the New Zealand government to prepare the islanders for self-government and independence. On 1 January 1962, Western Sāmoa became the first Pacific nation to gain independence. It currently has a parliamentary form of government (universal suffrage began only in 1990), but only *matai* holders can stand for election. Economically, Sāmoa still remains one of the world's least developed countries despite heavy contributions from foreign nations. Samoan culture has remained closer to its ancient past than any other Polynesian island group, except perhaps Tonga. Ninety percent of the population is Samoan, and although English is spoken, Samoan is the language heard in daily conversations. The dignity and pride shown by the Samoan people in their traditional customs and culture are enviable among Pacific islanders.

### **Kingdom of Tonga**

Tonga is considered the most ancient of all the Polynesian islands. Similar to Sāmoa, Lapita peoples settled these islands by 1300 B.C., but unlike most other Polynesian islands, the ancient Tongans recognized a central authority residing in an individual called the Tu'i Tonga ("king" of Tonga), whose authority was eventually divided between spiritual and temporal powers about A.D. 1470. Also, no foreign power in modern times has ever gained full control over Tongan government and society. Essentially, Tonga has been able to accept or reject whatever Western culture presented to it. It also is the only remaining independent kingdom in the South Pacific.

In early modern times, numerous European explorers visited Tonga (Jacques le Maire and W. C. Schouten in 1616, Abel Tasman in 1643, and Captain Cook in the 1770s, for example). Both Captain Cook and a beachcomber named William Mariner, who visited Tonga between 1806 and 1810, left rich ethnographic accounts of Tongan politics, society, and culture. Clashes between Tongans and the early settlers often ended in conflict and death. The first English Christian missionaries arrived in 1797, but they had to abandon their mission by 1800. The first successful Christian mission was reopened again in 1826, and that success came about only upon the conversion of warrior-chief Tāufa'āhau in 1831. By 1852, Tāufa'āhau gained political ascendancy in Tonga, and with it brought the successful conversion of all of Tonga. Tāufa'āhau ruled as King Siaosi (George) Tupou I until his death in 1893. He established law codes (1850

and 1852) and a constitution (1875), built schools, roads, and buildings, and signed treaties with France, Great Britain, Germany, and the United States that recognized his independence. In 1905, a modified “protectorate” treaty with Great Britain essentially brought Tonga within the jurisdiction of the British Empire. Tonga’s most beloved Queen Salote (r. 1918–1965) significantly modernized Tonga through her very capable administration. In 1970, Tonga’s protectorate status with the British was lifted, and since then it has been an independent kingdom within the British Commonwealth.

Currently, Tonga’s conservative government consists of the king, a privy council, a cabinet, and a legislative assembly (consisting of the king; the cabinet; nine hereditary nobles, elected by the thirty-three nobles of Tonga; and nine commoner representatives, elected by universal adult suffrage). Pro-democracy movements continue to demand more say in the government, and Tonga’s poor economy puts a strain on government and society alike. In the past, few foreigners immigrated to the islands, and consequently the population (100,200) is predominantly Tongan. Most of them are bilingual, speaking Tongan and English (the language of education and government), and Tonga boasts a literacy rate of 99 percent.

## Easter Island

One of the most remarkable human feats of all times is the Polynesian settlement of Easter Island (locally called Rapanui). This island lies in the far eastern Pacific Ocean, two thousand miles from the nearest habitable island or from the South American continent, yet the island was most likely settled by seafaring colonists from the Marquesas Islands by A.D. 450. These early settlers were called “short ears,” and there was a later group of settlers called “long ears.” They remained rivals on the small island, and in the early modern period, feuding broke out between them, bringing havoc and destruction. There is evidence of some South American contact (the sweet potato, for example), but Polynesians could have sailed to the continent and brought the potato back with them. Easter Island’s most famous ancient achievement, of course, is its massive *moai* (stone statues), which were carved without the use of iron tools, and because of which, in May 1996, UNESCO declared Easter Island a “Cultural Possession of Humanity.”

Jacob Roggeveen first sighted the island on Easter Day 1722, thus the reason for its modern name, and other explorers arrived bringing Western culture and diseases. The population was decimated between 1862 and 1863 by slave

traders who landed and took 1,500 islanders to work in the guano mines in Chili. Roman Catholicism was introduced in 1864. Several business entrepreneurs attempted to establish modern agricultural undertakings, but without success. By 1877, the population had dropped from 4,000 to only 110 individuals. In 1888, the island was annexed to Chili because of its strategic location. During the twentieth century, Easter Islanders have revolted against the Chilean government. It was only through a threatened invasion by France (1966) that Chili granted Easter Island the status of a civil department and a voice in the government. Since then, Chili has spent millions of dollars on Easter Island.

## **Tuvalu**

Ranking as the second-smallest nation in the world (Vatican City being the smallest), Tuvalu consists of nine small islands and atolls and a population of only 10,114. It lies north of Fiji within five degrees of the equator. The islands were first settled by colonists from Sāmoa, but evidence indicates that perhaps settlers from both Tonga and the Micronesian Islands to the north may have drifted to the islands. In early modern times, they were named the Ellice Islands from the visit of Edward Ellice in 1819. They were visited by whalers and beach-combers in the early nineteenth century and by slave traders in the early 1860s. The islands were Christianized in 1861 by missionaries from the Cook Islands, and during the rest of the nineteenth century, they remained isolated. British Captain Herbert W. S. Gibson declared a protectorate over them in 1892 to prevent France from doing the same. They were joined to the Gilbert Islands that Britain had annexed the previous year. They were thus administered until 1967 when they gained a constitution, and again in 1975 when they gained independence, a constitution (1978), a parliamentary government, and a new name—Tuvalu (“eight standing alone”)—at which time they became a British dependency. Tuvalu has one of the poorest economies in the world, and it relies heavily upon subsidies from the outside and whatever innovative businesses its citizens can devise. Tuvalu is one of those Pacific island nations seriously worried about global warming, because any slight rise in the ocean surface from melting glaciers and icebergs at the poles will inundate the islands and eliminate them from the world map!

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## CREATION AND THE COSMOS

**A**lmost all humans possess a strong yearning to know more about the universe in which they live and how it came into being. Wherever they lived and traveled, the earliest humans spent most of their days out in the open, being one with the air they breathed, the sky above, and the earth beneath. Most often, their nights were spent under the stars, where they observed the march of the constellations across the heavens and the movements of the planets weaving in and out among them. After the development of writing, records were kept of these celestial phenomena for century after century. It is not surprising, therefore, that our earliest societies—Mesopotamia and Egypt—knew a great deal about the earth and sky, that they had identified and given names to the five observable planets, and that they understood the circular character of the moon, sun, and earth. Although they understood these complex phenomena, these same humans nevertheless asked the questions, How did the universe come into being? and Where did we come from? Almost every culture and civilization has dealt with these complex issues, and almost every one has established legends or stories to explain them.

The Polynesians are no different. Entering the Pacific from Southeast Asia and being part of the vast human race that peopled the globe, these islanders most certainly brought some oral traditions with them. Once established in these new islands, however, the Polynesians were cut off and separated from any outside influence for thousands of years. Whatever oral traditions they brought with them sooner or later became embellished and modified over that long stretch of time. Even so, it is not surprising to discover that Polynesian creation myths differ, in essence, very little from some of the other great mythologies of the world—Greek and Indian, for example. The Greek theologian Hesiod wrote that in the beginning there was Chaos, vast and dark, and the Polynesian priest chanted that in the beginning there was nothing but the deep, dark Pō (night). Both claim that out of Chaos or the Pō other gods came into being, which eventually led to the creation of animals, plants, and humans. In India, the primordial waters brought forth an egg that contained all of creation, and after a thousand years, Brahma broke forth and commenced the act of creation. In Tahiti, a similar story is told. For eons of time, the god Ta'aroa lived alone in his shell. Finally, he broke



through his shell and began the act of creation. From one-half of his shell, he created the heavens, and from the other half, the earth. Other comparable examples can be given to show similarities between other cultures and the Polynesians. The major difference between them is that the two classical civilizations of Greece and India have had several thousand years of learned commentaries written about their stories, while Polynesian mythology remains relative new, in its academic infancy. I am not suggesting here that Polynesian mythology sprang from the Greek or Indian cultures, but that the legends of early peoples have many common denominators, simply because they are human and share a thinking process that emerged from some central origin in the far distant past. It is not surprising, therefore, to find their reasons and explanations for the unknown not far different from one another.

## **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLYNESIAN CREATION STORIES**

Frequently, I am asked by students or interested persons to summarize what the Polynesians believe about the creation. Unfortunately, there exists no one story in Polynesia to answer that request. Polynesian creation stories vary in detail not only from one island group to another but from one tribe to another living on the same island. Sometimes you hear the name of a certain god mentioned in several localities, but very often the god's attributes and characteristics vary widely. Often you hear of certain gods performing similar feats here and there, but their names hardly resemble each other. Even though Polynesians share many common characteristics, they are also as widely diverse a group as you will find anywhere. This is especially true concerning their mythology.

The numerous Polynesian creation stories, however, can be generally categorized under two major themes. The most common is creation through an evolutionary or procreation process, through a natural sexual union of male and female entities. The second and less known is the creation by a single, supreme being who creates the world out of himself. The second apparently is a newer innovation, and some scholars believe it came into being only after the introduction of Judeo-Christian beliefs among the Polynesians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This chapter will investigate these two themes in depth and will then summarize the diverse beliefs found in each major island group—Hawai'i, Tahiti, the Marquesas, the Tuamotus, the Cook Islands, Sāmoa, and Tonga.

Ancient Polynesians knew the intricacies of procreation. Most of the Westerners who first set foot upon the islands recorded that Polynesians loved

sex. There were very few taboos regulating their behavior in this regard. Sex was simply a high form of joy and entertainment and was appreciated by all. It was open and freely engaged in, and even the youngest Polynesian understood that human creation came through the union of male and female. So when seeking answers to the question, How did the universe come into being? the Polynesian surmised that it must have come into existence like all other creation—through the natural union of male and female entities. Similar to human families, Polynesians believed that creation itself had a genealogical pedigree that began in the far distant past and extended down to the present generation, and they were a part of it. In many cases, the beginning started in *pō* (darkness), and darkness begot light, which begot daylight, which begot enduring light, and so forth. Often both male and female are named, such as Sky Father and Earth Mother, and they united and formed the first great gods. Or perhaps certain male and female rocks mated and formed other aspects of creation, or the “End of the Day” united with “Beginning of the Day” and the two brought forth the rain, the heavens, and so forth. Creation by sexual union can be found in all of the island groups.

Although most of the Polynesian myths begin with male and female entities already in existence, there are some that begin with a supreme god of creation, but, as suggested before, these stories may have been altered as a result of contact with the arrival of the Christian explorers and missionaries, who caused major changes in island belief, life, and customs. In these stories, the creator god dwelled in the heavens without father or mother, without light, without day, or without land. For some reason, the god awoke or became conscious and formed the heavens and earth from a shell (coconut or an egg) from which he emerged, and then from parts of his body, he created the various life forms on earth. On Mangaia and in the Tuamotus, however, it was a supreme goddess who had this auspicious task of creation. It is interesting to note that stories of a supreme deity are found only in Central and Eastern Polynesia (Tahiti, New Zealand, the Tuamotus, the Cook Islands, etc.) but not in Western Polynesia (Sāmoa and Tonga, for example). Specific details of the creation myths from each of the islands are discussed in greater depth below.

## Tahiti

Many myths of creation are told in Tahiti. The island’s most famous ethnographer, Teuira Henry (1847–1915), published most of the known ones in her famous book *Ancient Tahiti*, which first appeared in 1928. Details in her book

were based, however, on the extensive notes of her grandfather, the Reverend John M. Orsmond, who lived in Tahiti from 1817 until his death in 1856. He carefully recorded the sacred chants from various high priests and other officials who knew these ancient stories. There are many similarities in these creation myths, yet each often adds interesting details not found in the others, and some are not always in agreement. Collectively, they rival any of our other world's cultures in their epic character and length.

Most tell of the great creator god Ta'aroa, the creator of all, without father and mother, who for all eternity resided in a "shell," a type of egg that floated in an endless void. There was no sky, no land, no sun, no moon, or no stars. Ta'aroa finally broke out of his *rumia* (shell) and shouted, Who is there? Hearing no answer, he returned back into his shell, where he slept again for eons of time. Finally, he emerged once again from his close confinement and loneliness and began the act of creation. From one-half of his shell he made stratum rock, earth, and sand, and from the other half he made the dome of the sky, but the two halves were still closely confined, and there was darkness all around. In the darkness, he created the lesser gods. He breathed life into "foundation" and it became husband (*tumu-nui*), into "stratum rock" and it became wife (Papa). He commanded that they mate, and from their union came forth other forms of rock and earth. He called upon the god Tū to aid in the creation. Ta'aroa shook off some of his feathers, and they fell to earth, where they became trees, plants, and other forms of vegetation. But the earth and sky were still confined within the closeness of Ta'aroa's shell. As land became firm, Ta'aroa separated the earth and formed pillars to hold up the sky so that Ātea (space) could be extended. Ātea increased until there were ten skies or heavens. Then rain emerged and fell everywhere, and sea and earth life increased rapidly. When Ta'aroa saw all, he was pleased. He called it Havai'i—the birthplace of gods, the birthplace of life, and the birthplace of humans.

Ta'aroa and Tū jointly proclaimed: "We must now make humans." Thereupon, they created Ti'i, the first man, from the *'araea* (red earth), and Ti'i married the beautiful goddess Hina. They begot children who became the high royal families of Tahiti, the *ari'i*, the only ones privileged to wear the unique symbols of royalty—the red-feathered girdle, called the *maro 'ura*, and the long feathered capes. The *manahune* (common people) were simply "conjured" into being by Ti'i and Hina; and when these *manahune* intermarried with the royal *ari'i* families, a middle class or "gentry" (*ra'atira*) was formed. The *ra'atira* settled in the great bays, while the commoners settled along the seashore leading up to the lands of the nobility. Ta'aroa saw all and approved.

## New Zealand

In New Zealand, there are also many different versions of the Māori creation story. The most popular, however, is not the creation by a single god, but the genealogical male and female pairing of entities beginning with Sky Father (Rangi) and Earth Mother (Papa). Actual Māori cosmology begins far back before the first union of Rangi and Papa, however, with the preexistence of vast ages of time—Te Pō (The Night), Te Ao (The Light), and Te Kore (The Nothingness or Emptiness). Each of the three stages is subsequently divided into numerous subgroups, such as Te Pō-Tamaku (The Age Smoothed Off), Te Pō-Karauri (The Age of Extreme Darkness), and countless others. When this creation chant is recited, and even if you do not know the exact meanings of the words, you can almost feel the waxing and waning of the ages as if they were pregnant and about to give birth themselves. Te Kore, the last age, finally concludes with the appearance of Rangi and Papa, whose origins were both unspecified and who were already entwined together in a tight embrace. Between them existed numerous children—gods born of their union. Some legends list seventy sons. The most important ones, however, were Tāwhiri (winds and storms), Tangaroa (sea and fish), Rongo (sweet potato and food plants), Haumia (fern root and wild plants), Tū (fierce man), and Tāne (forest and birds).

Tired of being confined in such a tight, dark place, the children held a council to see what could be done. One son proposed that they kill their parents in order to separate them. Tāne, however, suggested that they merely rend them apart. Only the youngest, Tāwhiri, objected, for he refused to see his parents torn from each other's loving embrace. Each of the older sons tried to separate them, but without success. Eventually, Tāne placed his head against Papa (earth) and his feet against Rangi (sky) and pushed with all his might. The two parents were thus rent apart. Some legends say that the clinging arms of Rangi and Papa had to be severed before the two could be completely separated and that four poles or props had to be secured in order to hold them apart. It is said that the blood from their severed arms can still be seen in the red clay of the earth and in the red glow of the sunset. After the separation of Rangi and Papa, the sky was filled with rain and mist from the tears they shed for each other. Eventually, the children had to turn Earth Mother over so she and Rangi would no longer be forced to gaze upon each other and endure such endless grief.

Tāwhiri, the powerful wind god who had objected originally to such stringent measures, then declared war on his brothers for their dastardly deed. He warred against them with his fierce winds and hurricanes with their ominous lightning and thunderstorms. Many forests were destroyed, and dry land began

to appear. Waters were gathered together in such abundance that huge oceans emerged. Eventually, Tāwhiri defeated all of his brothers except Tū, who stood tall and brave, and through whose bravery, all of creation was saved.

The god Tāne then took it upon himself to increase the light in the world. From the god Tongotango (intensely dark), he created the stars, the moon, and finally the sun. He separated the sun from the moon and gave space to each by creating day and night.

Tāne was also responsible for the creation of humans. Some myths merely state that the first man (Tiki) was made by Tāne in Hawaiki, and that the first woman (Io-wahine) was made to be his wife. Others say that Tāne sought a wife for Tiki and finally went to a sandy beach where he mixed mud and sand and shaped it into the form of a woman. He breathed into her mouth and poured his procreative powers over her, and she became a living woman. The first human couple then multiplied and produced numerous progeny that spread across the islands of the sea.

## **Tonga**

There are actually very few Tongan creation stories, and in all cases, they tell nothing of a void in the beginning with a single god of creation. They begin with an already existing sky, moon, sun, stars, sea, land, and Pulotu (the underworld). One of the most authentic creation stories was published by Father P. Reiter in 1907. He said that one of the first Catholic missionaries had heard it from the mouth of a chief who was well advanced in age when he related it some sixty years before and that it had been passed down to him.

In this particular account, Limu (seaweed) and Kele (vase or receptacle) were found entwined together, floating upon the waves of the ocean until they reached Pulotu, where they gave birth to Touiafutuna (a large female, metallic stone) and where she remained. Then Touiafutuna stirred and gave forth a sound like a thunderbolt across the sky. She split open and out fell a set of twins—the male was called Piki and the female Kele. Touiafutuna remained there; once again she trembled and groaned, and gave birth to three other sets of twins—Atu-gaki (male) and Maimoa-alogona (female), Tonu-uta (male) and Tonu-tai (female), and Lupe (a dove) and Tuku-hali (a sea turtle or snake). The first set of twins cohabited and gave birth to a son, Tau-fuli-fonua, and a daughter, Havea-lolo-fonua, and the next two sets of twins each gave birth to only daughters—Vele-lahi and Vele-sii. The last pair, Lupe and Tuku-hali, had no children. Tau-fuli-fonua and Havea-lolo-fonua, children of the first couple, cohabited and gave birth to a son, Hikuleo. The two younger girls, Vele-lahi and Vele-sii, saw that

they did not have husbands, so they agreed to become the wives of Tau-fuli-fonua. They brought forth sons, whom they named Tagaloa and Māui. The three grandsons, Hikuleo, Tagaloa, and Māui, decided to divide up the world between them. Hikuleo received Puluotu (the underworld), Tagaloa received the sky, and Māui received the earth. Each became the governing god of each, although the powers of Hikuleo were widespread over the earth as well as his domain of Puluotu. Together they commanded Tuku-hali to go live in the sea and Lupe to go live on the land. And so this was the origin of the gods. Each one of the original three multiplied and filled up the land, the sea, and the sky with their children.

It was the sky god Tagaloa who first decided to create land. He was tired of just seeing water when he looked down from his abode in the heavens. He told his woodworking son Tangaloa Tufunga to throw his excess wood chips down to earth. Eventually, Tagaloa sent his pet bird (Tagaloa 'Atulongolongo) down to see if he could find land. Finally on the third try, the bird spied an island being formed. It was called 'Eua. Other islands were subsequently formed from the wood chips. In most Polynesian legends, however, it was the god Māui who was responsible for the creation of most of the Polynesian islands. Numerous legends throughout the islands tell of his "fishing" the islands up from the bottom of the sea (see the "Māui" entry in chapter 3).

Once, Tagaloa 'Atulongolongo flew through the sky with a seed in his beak. It accidentally dropped it on the island of 'Ata, where it grew into a creeping vine. The bird returned once again and found that the vine had rotted and there was a fat, juicy worm curled up inside. The bird pecked it in two, and from the two portions emerged the first two men of Tonga, named Kohai and Koau. A morsel of the worm from the bird's beak fell off, and it grew into a third man, named Momo. Seeing that they were without partners, the god Māui went to Puluotu where he found wives for them, and the three couples became the ancestors of the Tongan people.

## **Sāmoa**

In many ways, the Samoan creation myths mirror the stories found in Tonga. In the beginning, it is said, the High Rocks (Papatu) united with the Earth Rocks (Papa'ele) and the original gods were produced, including the gods Saolevao (god of the rocks/earth) and Saveasi'uleo (god of the underworld, or Puluotu). In the seventh generation, the god Tangaloa was born, and he is generally referred to as the principal god, the progenitor of all the other gods and humans on earth. One tradition maintains that Tangaloa had a son called Tuli (a type of plover bird) who flew down from the heavens and surveyed the surface of the earth. He found

no land on which to land, so he returned to his father and complained about his plight. Tangaloa thereupon threw a stone down from heaven, and it became land. Another tradition suggests that Tangaloa “fished” up the first land from the bottom of the sea with a fishhook. The rocks spread across the surface of the ocean and other islands were formed. Finally vegetation emerged, and Tuli returned to Tangaloa to complain once again. This time, he said that there were no men to inhabit the land. Thereupon, Tangaloa instructed Tuli to return to earth, pull up the grass, and let it rot. Two grubs would be produced. From them, Tuli and three of Tangaloa’s assistants carefully formed two living men, who lived on the land that Tangaloa had created. One day, the two men went fishing. Unfortunately, one of them died from an injury caused by a little fish called the *Io*. Tuli flew to heaven once again and complained to his father, who sent his messenger Ngai-tosi to earth to bring the man back to life. Before doing so, however, Tangaloa changed the sex of the dead man into that of a female, so that when the human was reanimated, it was in the form of a woman. The two humans united and became the parents of the whole human race.

## **Hawai’i**

The creation myths so elaborately and beautifully told in the other islands located in the South Pacific are not found in Hawai’i (located in the North Pacific). There are no stories of a supreme god of creation that at one juncture in time began the physical act of creation of the universe. There are no stories of the forceful separation of heaven (Rangi) from earth (Papa) or of the struggles between the children of heaven and earth after the deed was done. The few stories that do suggest incidents such as these are generally regarded as spurious because of their post-Christian origin in the late nineteenth century.

This does not mean, however, that there are no myths regarding the prehuman period on earth. On the contrary, there are many lengthy and detailed accounts of the early acts of the gods. According to scholar Martha Beckwith (1940), High Priest David Malo Kupihea, who was descended from a long line of priests on Moloka’i, claimed that the great gods of Hawai’i had immigrated to the islands at different times. The first two were Kū (male generative power) and Hina (female fertility), and they first landed at Kū-moku on the island of Lāna’i. Later came the gods Kāne and Kanaloa, accompanied by the hero Māui. Lono eventually followed, but he landed on the island of Māui. Their arrival in the Hawaiian islands, of course, presupposes their origin elsewhere. The strong tradition of the origin of the Hawaiian people far to the south in a land called Kahiki (Tahiti?) prevented such island-centered creation myths from arising in Hawai’i.



The Hawaiian myths that do exist, however, proclaim that it was Kāne who was the generative power that created the heavens, the earth, and human beings. Although Kū was considered the great ancestral and primal god, it was Kāne who was worshipped the most in ancient Hawai'i.

There is one notable exception to the previous statement regarding the lack of any Hawaiian creation myths. That is the legend called the *Kumulipo* (translated by Beckwith 1951). This myth offers a long and detailed genealogical account of the creation beginning with *pō* (darkness) of the earth, from which emerged Kumulipo (male) and Po'ele (female). Their union brings forth first the smallest animal life in the ocean and later the more advanced life forms on earth. This creation myth, however, was pretty much unknown to most of the Hawaiians because it was composed only in 1700 and recited only on two occasions before it was made public by King Kalākaua during his reign (1874–1891). Further details regarding the *Kumulipo* creation chant can be found in chapter 3.

### **Mangaia (Cook Islands) and the Tuamotus**

Two unique creation myths stand out above all the others; one comes from the island of Mangaia and the other from the Tuamotus. These two different traditions are unique because they attribute the origin of all creation to female deities, the goddess Vari-ma-te-takere on Mangaia and the goddess Kiho in the Tuamotus.

The Mangaian legends maintain that Vari-ma-te-takere dwelled alone at the very beginning of creation in the underworld (Avaiki). From her own body, she plucked forth her six children—Vātea (Avatea), the father of gods and men; Tini-rau, lord of the seas; Tango, lord of the birds; Tumu-te-ana-ao (Echo), female rock; Raka, the wind god; and Tū-metua, a beloved daughter whom Vari held close to her in Avaiki. Vari's first-born, Vātea, became the great god of earthly creation. It is said that once he dreamed of a beautiful maiden, but could not find her anywhere. He finally set a trap consisting of freshly ground coconut spread on the ground deep inside a nearby cave. Vātea then hid behind a rock, and when he saw a dainty arm reach for the coconut, he grabbed it. Of course, it belonged to the beautiful goddess Papa (Foundation), and consequently she became his cherished wife. They had five sons; Tangaroa and Rongo, twin gods, were their first-born. After these sons had grown up, dissension arose between them, and they decided to divide creation between them. Tangaroa received all that was the color of red (the sacred color), and Rongo got everything else. When the piles of possessions were collected together, of course, Rongo's was the largest, and as a result he became the paramount god of Mangaia. His wife was Tākā, and their



only daughter was Tavake. When Tavake grew up, she gave birth to three sons—Rangi, Mokoïro, and Akataura. Rongo loved his grandsons and wished that they would come and live with him. The grandsons, however, desired their own lands, and working together, they pulled up rocks from the bottom of the sea to “the world of light.” These rocks formed islands known today as the Cook Islands. Rangi, Mokoïro, and Akataura took up residence on Mangaia, where they became its principal gods and chiefs, and from them sprang the three principal tribes of the island.

Similar to the Mangaïans, the Tuamotuans were convinced that their islands (the center of their universe) had been created by a powerful creator goddess by the name of Kiho. One of the most splendid translations of this creation myth was made by the American scholar John F. Stimson (1883–1958) in the first half of the twentieth century. Stimson went to Tahiti in 1912 where he lived for the rest of his life. He mastered four of the Central Polynesian language dialects and became an obsessive collector of old tales and legends. His interpretive translations have never been surpassed in their elegance and beauty. In particular is his Tuamotuan “Psalm of the Creation,” which vividly describes the creation as told by the interplay between male and female entities. Portions of the original are reproduced below to give an example of the beauty and quality of this ancient chant.

### **A Psalm of the Creation**

Whilst the Supreme Goddess was, the heavens were not.  
There was no land;  
There was no living thing.  
Kiho—Eternal Sleeper—lay dreamless in the void of space.  
*At last the goddess awoke.*  
Then Kiho looked upward into the black, gleamless Night—  
It was the First Beginning of all things;  
And Kiho glanced down at her abiding-place  
within the immemorial Night, saying:  
“This is indeed the dark Night of Havaiki!”  
Then Kiho mused of all things whatsoever that might be;  
And she caused her thoughts to take form—  
She spoke to her Other Self—to Kio of the heavens, saying:  
“May I be eloquent of my occult wisdom,  
May I be prodigal of my outpouring knowledge—  
so that all things to be shall hearken!”  
*Began to stir the inner urge of the land,*

*Began to stir the inner urge of Havaiki.*  
 The Night-world lay in untroubled sleep  
 beneath the non-existence of the earth.  
*It was the inner urge stirring,*  
*It was the inner urge budding forth,—*  
*Sheath wrapped,*  
*Reaching upward,*  
*Moving freely,*  
*Branching out above,*  
*Taking root below!*  
*It was the creative urge of life*  
*about to stand erect within the Mother Earth,*  
*It was the male principle of life*  
*soon to stand proudly Forth in Havaiki!*  
 Never had existed the upward urge of the land,  
 Never had existed the different levels of the earth,  
 The fluidity of the earth,  
 The rigidity of the earth,  
 The emergence of the land,  
 The wide spreading of the land,  
 The fissuring of the land,—  
 The multiplicity of all the lands of the earth.  
 Not yet had come into being  
 the overhanging curvature of the land masses,  
 Not yet had come into being the two thighs of the Unknowable One—  
 the reproductive power of the Earth-mother.  
*Original-darkness was sleeping*  
*beneath the non-existence of the land,*  
*Original-brightness was sleeping*  
*beneath the non-existence of the land.*  
 . . .  
*The rock base of the Universe was sleeping*  
*beneath the non-existence of the land,*  
*The radiant realm of the Sky Regent was sleeping*  
*beneath the non-existence of the land.*  
 Then Kiho conjured forth the Primordial waters  
 through the divine power of her outpouring eloquence.  
 They commenced to rise, flowing upward—  
 The Primeval waters welled up in the bowl of the vast abyss.  
 Now Kiho spoke to her Other Self—  
 to Kio, her husband-brother, saying:  
 “Make thou violently to quake the very rock base of Havaiki

so that I become aware of all existence—  
So that the Universe be torn asunder,  
and all things be set apart in their rightful places!"  
*And at once Kiho made her eyes to glow with fire—  
red as the volcano's womb in parturition  
of the molten Earth*

AND THE DARKNESS BECAME LIGHT.

...

Then Kiho created Land-established-in-darkness—  
It was an earth realm, it was below.  
And Kio created Land-established-in-light—  
It was a sky realm, it was above.  
*Now Kiho rose, nearly upright, in the World of Darkness,  
And Kio rose, not yet fully upright, in the World of Light.*  
Then Kiho created Havaiki-the-ancient-homeland—  
It was an earth realm, it was below.  
And Kio created Life-seed-of-the-sacred-one—  
It was a sky realm, it was above.  
*Now Kiho straightened up to her full height in the World of Darkness,  
And Kio rose, fully erect, in the World of Light.*

...

And she took the red earth and heaped it into a mound,  
forming a woman's parts;  
And Kiho blew into the mound of red earth her sacred,  
vitalizing breath—  
And this red, cherished earth became imbued with life.  
Then Kio, the divine giver of life, impenetrated that red,  
cherished earth, filling it wholly,  
And immediately it was transformed into a sentient being.  
This living being was slumbering—  
*Then it awoke.*

...

Then Kiho spoke to Kio, saying:  
"O Mighty Brother and Husband—co-ruler and Sovereign Supreme!  
O Kio of the highest heaven!  
Thou shalt mount upward,  
Thou shalt soar on high,  
Thou shalt fill the firmament above—  
Thou shalt become forever established in thy Heaven-sphere;  
Thou art the Center post of thy house,  
Thou art the Builder of thy home—  
Verily thou art the Foundation of thy heaven!

Thou art the Above,  
 Thou art the Below,  
 Thou art the Beginning,  
 Thou art the End—  
 Thou art the First longing and the Last fulfillment,  
 THOU ART THE ALL!"(Stimson 1957, 4–9)

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLYNESIAN COSMOS (HEAVENS)

All Polynesian peoples conceived their universe as being made up of certain elements, among which are the heavens, the world of humans, and the underworld. Although varying differences are found from one island to another, there are certain themes that are shared by all. First, most Polynesians believed the universe was formed round in the shape of the common coconut, but sometimes in the shape of an egg. The coconut is the Polynesian staff of life. Nuts are easily broken in two by a sharp whack with a stone on the natural line that runs between the “eyes” of the coconut. In most cases, the coconut breaks cleanly and evenly, leaving two equal halves. So it is with the universe. The top half of the coconut resembles the dome of heaven with its stars, moons, sun, and clouds, and, of course, the residing places of the deities. An imaginary platform between the two halves resembles the earth’s surface where humans live. The lower half of the coconut corresponds to the underworld. Both halves—the heavens and the underworld—are subsequently divided into divisions or levels designated for the residents of specific heavenly or otherworldly beings. This concept of divisions within heaven and the underworld is similar to the famous Italian epic poem the *Divine Comedy*, written by Dante (early fourteenth century), in which his Christian heaven and purgatory are both divided into nine different levels.

The New Zealand Māori talk of ten different levels of the heavens and give each a specific name, and each is presided over by a specific god or goddess. The four highest heavens, for example, are ruled by the omnipotent god Rehua, who is depicted as having long locks of flowing hair and lightning flashing from under his arms, and whose powers include curing diseases and raising the dead. The three lowest heavens are ruled over by Maru with his wind, storm, and rain, and the next three by Tāwhaki, one of the most beneficial of Māori gods. Tāwhaki was originally a human whose celestial wife left him to return to heaven. Desperately, Tāwhaki pursued her by climbing a spiderweb (or vine) and entered heaven. There he assumed divine powers with command over thunder and lightning and three of the ten heavens. Each of

the successive heavens rises above the earth, one above one another, and each is supported by pillars that have been created specifically for that purpose. (In Tahiti, the heavens are supported either by pillars or by an octopus with its long, clinching tentacles.)

Interestingly, the ten Māori lower worlds are ruled over by goddesses. The first four levels under the earth are ruled over by Hine-nui-te-po, the Great Lady of the Night. She originally lived in the heavens as the goddess of light, Hine-titama, daughter of the great god Tāne. She fled from his presence, however, and sought refuge in the world below, where she became the great goddess of the night and of death. The next three realms of the underworld are ruled over by Rohe, wife of the great demigod Māui; and Miru, the hell goddess, rules the lowest three realms—the realms of darkness—surrounded by reptile gods, witchcraft, and a multitude of evil deities.

In 1869, a particularly interesting drawing of the Polynesian universe was made by Chief Paiore from the Tuamotu atolls, located northeast of the island of Tahiti. The drawing was published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* in 1919 and is reproduced here as Figure 2.1 to illustrate how the Polynesians viewed their upper and lower worlds (Young 1919). Several similar drawings have survived from the same time period and have been collected by the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. In an article he wrote in 1939, Professor Kenneth Emory of the museum cautions us that “Polynesian cosmogonies do not lend themselves readily to pictorial representation—and so far as we know the Tuamotuanans did not attempt to represent events pictorially” (Emory 1939, 16). Note the many humans propping up the various levels above them and the steps in the center of creation that run from the lower depths of the underworld to the uppermost parts of the heavens.

In 1928, Teuria Henry published a creation story attributed to Paiore, the same chief who drew the original of the chart reproduced in Figure 2.1. In this story, Paiore states that after the people had greatly multiplied, Hoatu (combination of the gods Ātea and Hotu) proposed that they increase their living space by raising the layer above them. “So strong men,” Paiore says, “raised the layer above them with their arms, mounting upon each other’s shoulders as they did so until the highest trees could stand upright. When the lowest layer of earth became filled with creation,” he continues, “the people made an opening in the middle of the layer above, so that they could get upon it also, and there they established themselves, taking with them plants and animals from below. Then they raised the third layer in the same manner as the first, and ultimately established themselves there also, so that human beings had three abodes. Above the earth were the skies, also superposed, reaching down and supported by their respective horizons, some being attached to those of the earth; and the people

continued to work expanding one sky above another in the same manner, until all were set in order" (Henry 1928, 347).

In 1876, William Gill published another interesting drawing (reproduced as Figure 2.2) that shows how the people of Mangaia (Cook Islands) conceived their universe. Again, the basis of the universe resembles a coconut, the interior of which, as Gill explains, represents Havaiki or the underworld with its six divisions or "lands." The dark stem at its base depicts the very beginning of things, and its tapered point is called Te-Aka-ia-Roē (the

Root of all Existence). Immediately above Te-Aka are two other foundation beings—Te-Vaerua (Breathing or Life) and Te-Manava-Roa (The Long Lived). At the lowest depths inside the "coconut" lies the creator goddess Vari-ma-takere (The Very Beginning, as we have already discussed above), and above her the other divisions of Havaiki, or the underworld. On the very top of the shell lies the island of Mangaia, which legends tell us was "dragged up" from Havaiki at the bottom of the sea, and on which the Mangaians live. Their philosophers also say that the island represents a crude form of an invisible essence that still remains deep within the underworld. The drawing also depicts the sun and moon circling Mangaia. Above the island stretches ten heavens or spirit lands, each built of azure stones with apertures in them for intercommunication and travel. As Gill points out, any Polynesian island could be substituted for Mangaia and it would pretty much represent that island's cosmology.

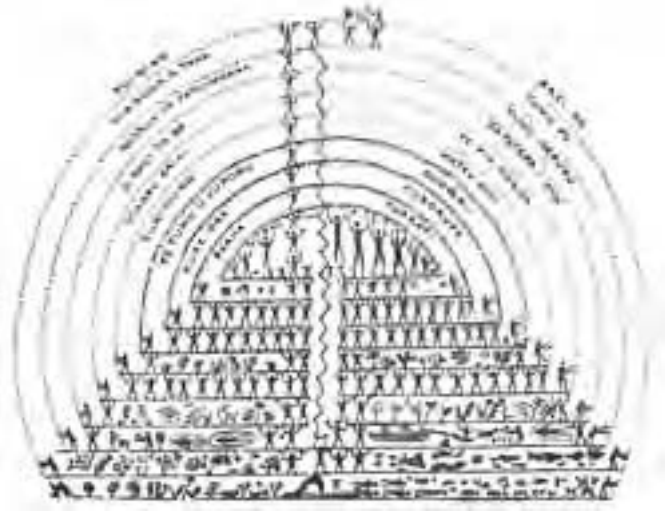


Figure 2.1: Drawing of the Tuamotuan universe as described by Chief Paioire in 1869. (Journal of the Polynesian Society)

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLYNESIAN GODS AND GODDESSES

Ancient Polynesians drew a clear division between their mortal world and the world occupied by their various *atua* (deities, demigods, and ghosts). Each occupied different parts of the universe—human beings inhabited the earth, and the

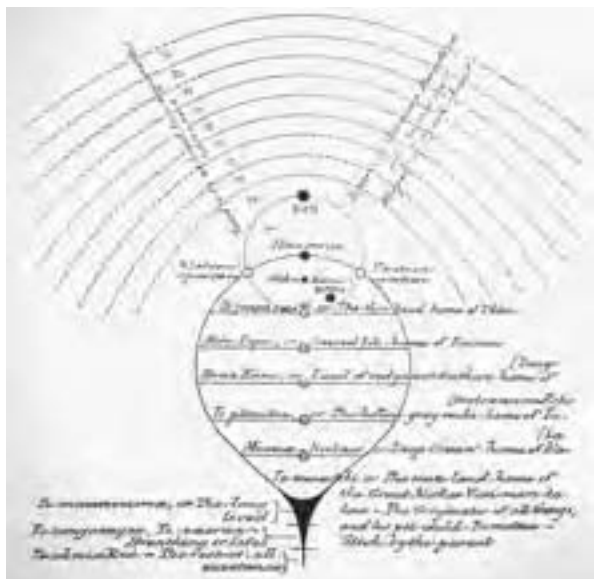


Figure 2.2: William Gill's 1876 drawing depicting the Mangaian view of the universe. (Courtesy of *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific*, by William Wyatt Gill. London: Henry S. King, 1876, p. 3)

*atua* occupied the various levels of the heavens above and the world beneath. According to Polynesian traditions, there existed a hierarchy or ranking of deities in their world just as there existed a distinctive social ranking of human society here on earth. The most powerful *atua*, of course, occupied the topmost level of the heavens. These *atua* consisted of the original gods, the great gods of creation—Tangaloa, Tū (Kū), Tāne (Kāne), 'Oro, Ātea, Rangi, and so forth. They were the primordial ones—those who assisted in the creation of the universe. The minor gods

and goddesses occupied the other levels of the heavens and underworld. In a Tahitian prayer, for example, a priest at 'Opoa on Rā'iatea called upon numerous heavenly messengers to “run” to the various deities and summon them to their religious ceremony. Some of the messengers had to run to the various heavens and underworlds, while others ran under the sea, to some far distant and mythical land, or to the winds and stars to summon the gods to Rā'iatea. Subordinate to these highest-ranking deities was an enormous number of others—gods of districts, villages, and families—and there were also gods of occupations, such as carpenters, fishermen, builders, hairdressers, and thatchers, while other gods presided over sporting events, games, dances, wars, and adultery or fornication. Even thieves had their patron gods!

The exact nature and shape of these deities, unfortunately, are uncertain because much of the scant evidence we have is unreliable (collected after Christianization of the islands) or incomprehensible because of the vague and almost unintelligible translations. The surviving creation chants contain so much poetic imagery and allusive references within them that their translations are almost meaningless. Some references in these chants, however, lead us to believe that these ancient gods resembled human beings. The Hawaiians, for example,



believed their deities had arrived in their islands from a distant homeland called Hawaiki or Kahiki. Their lives in Hawai'i resembled those led by their sacred high chiefs, the *ali'i nui*, except, of course, the *atua* had far superior knowledge and supernatural powers than the chiefs. The deities lived, ate, drank, married, indulged in sexual activities, fought, and quarreled among themselves very much like the classical Greek gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus. The Polynesian *atua* were influenced, we are told, by the same motivations that operate upon the minds of humans, and they could be influenced by bribes, or one *atua* could be neutralized by the intercession of another more powerful *atua*.

Although many of the gods were indifferent to human endeavors, some demanded human devotion and food or animal sacrifices. If these demands were fulfilled, the gods would watch over their devotees and reward them. (Polyynesians never worshipped or praised their gods as Christians might do. They offered sacrifices to them when they had a specific need.) The wrath and punishment of the gods came about only as a result of their being neglected, not because of some "immoral" act committed by a human. Similar to the ancient Sumerian gods, who "ate" the burnt offerings of their worshipers, the Polynesian gods, also, demanded the same type of offerings so that they, too, might eat. These offerings consisted of fish, dogs, pigs, coconuts, breadfruit, bananas, and so forth. Major events, such as wars between island groups, the inauguration of a new high chief, or the dedication of an important new building often required human sacrifices. Sacrifices in these instances usually came from members of the slave class or from prisoners of war (and never women), and they were never placed upon the altar and slain like we find in other cultures of the world. They were placed upon the altar already dead, for they had been killed elsewhere with as little bloodshed as possible, because the gods would not accept a disfigured sacrifice.

Communication between gods and humans occurred on frequent occasions. Gods sometimes assumed the form of an animal before appearing before humans. For example, the light-yellow thrush, always recognized as a messenger of the god 'Oro, might land upon a sacrifice or on a particular branch of a nearby tree to indicate that 'Oro had acknowledged their prayers. In this case, it was believed that the god 'Oro had temporarily transformed himself into the bird to make his wishes known. *Atua* could change themselves into any object or animate being, or they could take possession of it. An ordinary pig under normal circumstances would demand little or no respect, but when possessed by the god 'Oro during a religious ceremony, it became extremely sacred and everyone trembled and feared a disaster was forthcoming. On other occasions, an *atua* might take possession of a human being (a priest, for example), who would then



verbally express the *atua*'s wishes. (For further information on this subject, see the "Priests" entry in chapter 3.)

Throughout Polynesia, carved stone or wooden statues also served as earthly vehicles through which the gods communicated with mortals. Theoretically, these statues were not actually worshiped, but became a sacred vehicle on occasion through which the gods might communicate their desires. Usually the statues were carefully stored away, out of sight, until needed. Then, they would be retrieved, unwrapped, and set up to receive the god's spirit. (For further information, see the "God Images" entry in chapter 3.) These anthropomorphic statues were usually stored behind the altars of sacred, open-air structures called *marae* or *heiau*. Elaborate ceremonies, presided over by high chiefs and priests, would accompany their unveiling, after which they would be carefully rewrapped and returned to their safe hiding places. (See the illustrations of god images in the illustrations for the entry "God Images" in chapter 3.)

Other methods of divination included the reading of auguries. This, of course, required very specific and specialized knowledge by the priest doing the reading. Certain animals were killed upon the altars of the outdoor temples and their entrails carried and laid before a high priest. Prayers were offered up by subordinate priests while the high priest very carefully examined the animal's entrails. After the reading, the remains of the animal would either be burned upon a fire or thrown into a pit inside or outside the walls of the temple.

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## DEITIES, THEMES, AND CONCEPTS

### ALELE, WINGED THIEVES OF SĀMOA

Cultural Group: Sāmoa

Anciently, there lived on the western part of Savai'i (Sāmoa) a mythological people called the Alele. They had wings and could fly from one island to another, successfully stealing whatever they could find. They often swooped down on plantations, gathered great quantities of food on their backs, and then flew away. (Their deeds remind us of the Harpies in Greek mythology—winged women, the “hounds of Zeus,” who would swoop down, capture humans, and carry them away without a trace.)

Once, we are told, the Alele went too far. When they stole the entire yam crop of Chief Tuisamata on Tutuila island, he called for his grandson, Le-le'a-sapai, to come and rid them of these terrible winged creatures. The rest of the story tells of Le-le'a-sapai's quest to find the Alele and destroy them. Having prepared his canoe, he sailed westward toward Savai'i to find the culprits, but somehow he was blown off track and wound up in Pulumotu (the Samoan underworld). Once there, he met Saveasi'uleo, king of the underworld, and told him of his plan to destroy the Alele. Savea and his demons, however, were friends of the Alele and secretly planned to kill Le-le'a-sapai before he left. Le-le'a-sapai, however, was aware of their deceit and successfully survived three different tricks that Savea played on him. The demons finally conceded defeat and agreed to let Le-le'a-sapai leave, but before going, they told him that he must lie in wait at a certain pool to ambush the Alele and that he must kill all of them except their king. Le-le'a-sapai followed their advice and killed the Alele. Fearful and defeated, the Alele king swore that none of his people would ever again visit Sāmoa and plunder its gardens. That is why the people of Sāmoa still have yams today. That is also why, when they do not know the name of a robber, they say that it must have been the Alele who did it.

Another surviving legend of the Alele ends the story in a different way. When Le-le'a-sapai reached the underworld, he was actually befriended by its king, Saveasi'uleo, who gave him advice on how to defeat the Alele and get his yams back. Savea also gave Le-le'a-sapai a magical war club and told him

to secretly place it where the Alele bathed. When the Alele came down to bathe, they began fighting among themselves for control of the beautiful club. When all was done, the Alele lay dead on the ground. When their king arrived and saw the devastation, he agreed that he would never rob the people of Sāmoa again. Savea only had three yams left, but he gave them back to Le-le'a-sapai, who returned them to his grandfather on Tutuila. When planting time came, the three yams were planted, and from these three came all the subsequent yams of Tutuila.

**See also** Elves and Fairies; Ghosts; Monsters; Plants (Food); Underworld

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## ARIOI SOCIETY

Cultural Group: Tahiti (French Polynesia)

This unique fraternal order of wandering entertainers, dedicated to the perpetuation of the worship of the war god 'Oro, is found in no other Polynesian island group. The first European explorers who came to these islands in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries left their vivid impressions of the "wild and debaucherous" group of young men and women who went from place to place, entertaining with song and dance, engaging in all sorts of sexual pleasures, and demanding lavish gifts for their visits. It was not surprising that the society became one of the first segments of Tahitian society condemned by the Christian missionaries when they arrived in 1797. Despite its condemnation, the society survived until after the 1830s. In fact, before Queen Pomare IV (1813–1871) was converted to Christianity, she openly supported and participated in the *arioi* activities on the outer islands; however, the cult slowly died out after her conversion in 1835.

Legends tell us that the society had its origins in Tahiti's primeval past. For some unknown reason, the powerful god 'Oro cast his wife down to earth, where she became a pillar of sand. His subsequent loneliness caused his two sisters to set out to seek a new wife for him. Their journeys finally brought them to the islands of Tahiti, Huahine, Rā'iatea, and Taha'a, but none of the local maidens was beautiful enough for their brother. Finally they discovered a ravishing maiden on Bora Bora by the name of Vai-rau-mati, who cordially welcomed the goddesses into her hut. Pleased with the young maiden and her willingness to become a bride for their brother, the goddesses returned to

heaven and announced their success to 'Oro. The next morning, he descended to earth on a brilliant rainbow, and the couple was married. As was the custom, Vai-rau-mati presented her new husband with many valuable gifts, but unfortunately 'Oro had nothing with him to give to his bride. He quickly returned to heaven, called for his sisters' two servants, and turned them into sacred pigs (a boar and a sow). He returned to earth and presented the two pigs to his new wife. (The two pigs were called Uru-tetefa and 'Oro-tetefa and were recognized as deities.) The following night, the sow brought forth a litter of five piglets, the first of which, 'Oro-i-tetea-moe, was recognized as especially sacred. 'Oro presented it to King Tamatoa I of Rā'iatea along with rules for the organization of a unique society (*arioi*) for the perpetuation of his particular cult of worship here on earth. The king then set about establishing lodges of the sect on the islands of Tahiti and Mo'orea, and from there it spread throughout most of the other Society Islands. By the end of the eighteenth century, it is estimated that approximately one-fifth of the population of these islands belonged to this unique group.

Theoretically, the presiding leader of the sect was the chief priest who lived on Rā'iatea, and each of the island districts had a subordinate grand master who controlled the day-to-day operations within that particular lodge. There were eight orders within the society; each was distinguished by a particular way of dressing and by various degrees and variations of tattoo. The highest order (a man over the men and a woman over the women) was distinguished by its rulers being heavily tattooed from their feet up to their groins, and, as a result, they were frequently referred to as "black legs." Their dress consisted of loincloths made of tapa and colored with red and yellow dyes, the symbols of Polynesian royalty. All of the lower orders had distinguishing tattoos and less colorful dress. The *arioi* was opened to all classes in society, but most of the top-ranking positions were members of the aristocracy. Novices entered the society through an elaborate ceremony and could only advance from one degree to another by mastering the intricate techniques of the dance, music, storytelling, and acting. As such, most of their lives were devoted to practicing and becoming proficient in the entertaining arts. They could not be encumbered with having children, and, consequently, abortion or infanticide was widely practiced. If children were born to the highest rank, however, they were considered offspring of the gods and were able to inherit their parents' titles.

The troops of the *arioi* spent most of their time practicing and preparing for their various journeys around the islands. When the day approached, they gathered up their precious belongings, made their obligatory prayers at the *marae* (temples) dedicated to 'Oro, and set off on double-hulled canoes (similar to large

catamarans) toward their planned destination. As they approached shore, the members aboard would begin their entertainment—singing loudly, clapping, and dancing on platforms constructed between the double-hulled canoes. Representatives of the local *arioi* lodge would officially welcome them, escort them to the local *marae* where reception ceremonies were held, and then present them before the chief, who normally welcomed them with a large feast and lavish gifts. The entertainment usually took place in large *arioi* houses constructed especially for this purpose. The high chiefs and priests were given places of honor high above the heads of the commoners. After an opening ceremony, the entertainment began. Some *arioi* told hilarious stories, many of which poked fun at the local rulers, priests, and commoners alike. Others performed frenzied dances with explicit sexual acts done with the utmost candor and ardor. To the early Europeans, the dances looked scandalous; however, to the Tahitians, they were neither reprehensible nor shocking. They were merely facets of ordinary life, facets that gave them great physical pleasure.

The performances lasted all night. The *arioi* slept during the day and then began their performances again the next evening. This continued for many days until the *arioi* decided that they had worn out their welcome or that the district no longer had the provisions to continue its lavish support. The troop would then gather up its implements and food and continue on its way, perhaps to the next district, where the whole amusement would begin all over again.

The *arioi* were highly regarded, considered sacred, and in times of war, were generally left in peace. When members of the *arioi* could no longer perform, they retired to a normal life, but they were still regarded as members of the sect. When they died, appropriate ceremonies were conducted for them in the *marae* dedicated to the god 'Oro, and their bodies were interred within the precincts of the *marae*. Of course, everyone believed that their souls had gone to that great *arioi* paradise that hovered just over the sacred island of Rā'iatea.

**See also** Dance; Sex and Sexuality; Tattoo; Temples

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*Illustration 3.1: The rocks of Orongo, Easter Island. Carvings on the rocks on the left depict the bird man, and the small islets off the coast are the destinations of the swimmers during the annual bird man contest. (Courtesy of Dr. M. J. Mahoney, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology)*

## **BIRDMAN CULT**

Cultural Group: Easter Island

On Easter Island, there emerged around A.D. 1500 an interesting system of choosing the primary leader of the island—an annual ceremony that continued until 1867. This remote island in the South Pacific was settled many centuries earlier by Polynesians, and the most important ruler of the island usually gained his powerful position through intertribal wars and intrigue. A new development in the choice of a ruler came, however, around 1500 when the islanders instituted an annual competition, rather than war, to determine their ruler for the next year. This unique ceremony was dedicated to Makemake (pronounced “mah-kay-mah-kay”), the creation god, and is referred to as the Birdman Cult of Easter Island.

Every spring (September, since Easter Island lies in the southern hemisphere), the villagers would make their way to the southwestern tip of the island, a sacred, rocky place called Orongo. There, each of the tribal leaders would





Illustration 3.2: Rubbing taken from a petroglyph of the bird man, Orongo, Easter Island. (Courtesy of Dr. M. J. Mahoney, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology)

select a young warrior to represent him in a competition that would follow. Festivities and religious observances would be held for days, while the participants eagerly awaited the return of the *manutara* (sooty tern birds) from their annual migration. Once the birds were seen arriving far out over the ocean, the priests would give a signal, and the young men would make their way down the precipitous cliff, dive into the cold ocean water, and swim to the small islets, located about 1 mile (1.5 kilometers) away (see Illustration 3.1). There they would wait for the first eggs of the tern to be laid. The young man who gathered and successfully returned with the first egg of the season was designated the winner, and his chief became the *tangata-manu* (birdman) for the coming year, a position that insured various ma-

terial privileges as well as religious and social prestige. The *tangata-manu* would be housed in a special hut located near Rano Raraku on the eastern side of the island. There he would be regarded as *tapu* (sacrosanct) and held similar to a "hermit monarch" until his rule was over the following spring. The religious ceremonies held at Orongo also insured the islanders of a good food supply for the coming year.

The rocks surrounding the Orongo site are carved with numerous petroglyphs (etchings in stone). The most remarkable ones combine the body of a man and the head and feet of a frigate bird, a bird sacred to the Rapanui nobility (see Illustration 3.2). The islanders also carved wooden statues in similar form, and some say they represent the god Makemake.

*See also* Birds; Makemake; Moai, Easter Island

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## BIRDS

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Birds are common in Polynesian myths perhaps because of their unique character of being able to fly through the heavens—something that most other living creatures cannot do. Because of this uniqueness, most birds are regarded as having a sacred nature, sacred enough to become the messengers of gods and, in many cases, incarnations of the gods themselves. In Sāmoa, for example, Turi was the bird messenger of the god Tagaloa during the creation, and in the story of Tinirau, Rupe took the form of a pigeon and flew down to rescue Sina and her son. Other legends tell similar stories of birds and their interactions with humans. Many birds have the ability to speak—pigeons, plovers, snipes, ducks, and mud hens—and others are gigantic in size, large enough to carry humans from one island to another. Some even have the power of witchcraft.

In some island groups, it was believed that deceased ancestors sometimes returned to their families in the form of birds for one reason or another. Polynesians also believed that birds (especially white ones) were shadows of the gods, and every island group identified their many different birds with their representative deities. For example, in Tahiti the brightly colored parakeet was the shadow of the powerful god Tū, the god of stability, and the yellow thrush was the shadow of the god 'Oro, one of the most powerful gods in all of Tahiti. In Hawai'i, the great white albatross was identified with the god Kāne, and in Tahiti with Ta'aroa. The *'elepaio* (fly catcher) was the goddess of canoe builders, and when a tree was chosen for the designated canoe, the builders waited to see if the *'elepaio* lit upon the tree and pecked at it. If it did, they knew the tree was rotten; therefore, they would not use it.

Ancient Polynesians' knowledge of birds was exhaustive and extraordinarily detailed. During their long oceangoing travels in their large double canoes, Polynesians relied on birds to help direct them to their remote destinations. It is also said that the ancient Polynesians used to send handcrafted pearl fish-hooks from one island to another tied to the legs of birds, and today, we hear of other islanders who communicate by sending messages back and forth to friends on other islands, similar to the use of carrier pigeons elsewhere in the world.

Polynesians also used to hunt birds, not for food, but for their colorful feathers. Feathers were generally considered sacred and were used in religious ceremonies and for human ornamentation. When praying, priests held sacred feathers upright to the skies to attract the attention of the gods, either a single feather or a wooden wand with numerous feathers attached to its end. Religious clothing was adorned with colored feathers from various birds and fowl. It was only the high chiefs, however, who could afford such feather ornaments, for it is said a single feather was worth the price of an entire hog. Some chiefs sent messengers to remote islands far distant from home in order to hunt or trade for these feathers. On the messengers' return, the chiefs had various types of clothing decorated with the feathers. Especially striking are the regal Hawaiian helmets made of a light frame over which were woven thousands of red and yellow feathers; the chiefs' flowing capes and standard-bearers were decorated in similar fashion. Comparable decorative clothing can be found throughout the other island groups. The most colorful feathers were also used to beautify the many sacred god statues used by the Polynesian priests in their *marae* (open-air temples).

When they went hunting, Polynesians constructed snares so that they could catch the bird, pull out the required feathers, and then release the bird back into the wild. Anciently, the islands abounded with thousands of species of birds, some indigenous to the islands, but when outsiders with their guns, rats, cats, and the like arrived, the bird population began to disintegrate. As a result, some islands today have only but a handful of bird species.

**See also** Birdman Cult; Hina; Māui; Rata or Laka; Tāne; Tangaloa; Tinirau

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## **BREADFRUIT, ORIGIN OF**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

For thousands of years, breadfruit (*Artocarpus incisa*) has been one of the staple foods throughout the Pacific, and its fame in modern times spread worldwide as a result of the famous story of the mutiny on the *Bounty* that occurred in 1789. (See Illustration 3.3.) Two years previously, the British government commis-



*Illustration 3.3: A breadfruit tree. These trees grow to enormous heights, and their fruit is a staple food throughout Polynesia. (U.S. Geological Survey)*

sioned Lieutenant William Bligh to set sail for Tahiti, where he was to obtain starts of the breadfruit tree and then to transport them to the West Indies. The British surmised that the cheap and prolific fruit would be accepted by the slaves as a suitable food. Of course, Bligh's original mission was unsuccessful since it ended in a mutiny aboard his ship. After the mutiny and Bligh's return to Britain, he sailed again to Tahiti, where he gathered additional starts and successfully transported them to the West Indies. Ironically, the slaves there did not like the breadfruit and refused to eat it.

In Polynesia, however, breadfruit still remains a major food source, and almost every island group offers its own legends regarding its origin. The most elaborate was recorded on the island of Rā'iatea in French Polynesia over a hundred years ago, and it tells the story of the selfless devotion of a father to his starving family. Once during the reign of King Noho-ari'i, a severe famine spread throughout the islands. On Tahiti, one man by the name of Rua-ta'ata,

his wife Rumau-ari'i, and their four children fled to the mountains in search of food. Finding little to eat, they retreated to a small cave, where they were forced to feed upon whatever small ferns they could find. As days passed, Rua-ta'ata became desperate. Then one evening he told his wife, "When you awake in the morning, go outside, and you will see my hands which have become leaves; look at the trunk and two branches of the tree, and they will be my body and legs; look at the round fruit upon it, which will be the cranium of my head, and the heart inside of the fruit will be my tongue." He then instructed her to pick the fruit from the tree, roast it over a fire, soak it in water, beat the skin off it, and then offer the delicate insides to the children for food. After he had given his instructions to his wife, Rua-ta'ata went outside, leaving his wife and children forever.

The next morning, Rumau-ari'i awoke and found her husband missing. She went outside as she had been instructed and found a magnificent, strange tree that had sprung up overnight. On the ground, she found ripe fruit that had fallen off the tree. Finally realizing the significance of her husband's instructions, she desperately grieved for what he had done—he had given up his life for the survival of his family. After she gathered the fruit and prepared it according to her husband's instructions, she and her four children heartily ate the new food. Now with the fruit of this new tree, they could survive the devastating famine.

Not long after, the king's servants happened to come upon some of the breadfruit remains as it washed down the mountain stream to the valley floor. They tasted the delicious leftovers and immediately rushed to find their origins. Eventually, they came upon the small valley in which Rua-ta'ata's family dwelt and saw the majestic tree.

They asked Rumau-ari'i, "What is this fruit?"

She replied, "It is '*uru*.'" (*Uru* is ancient Tahitian and meant the "head" of her husband.) "It comes from my husband, Rua-ta'ata, who let himself become breadfruit because of his sorrow for me and our starving children."

The servants named the valley Tua-'uru ("place of the breadfruit," located on Tahiti just east of the capital of Pape'ete and south of Point Venus) and transplanted the tree down near the coast. Then they loaded up their canoes with its ripe fruit and set sail to the sacred island of Rā'iatea, where they presented the fruit before the king. Once he tasted the delicious fruit, he demanded that the tree and Rua-ta'ata's family be brought to his island. The tree was then planted near the royal residence at 'Opoa, and it gained such a notoriety that many people begged to be allowed to take cuttings of the tree home with them. Eventually, the tree became bare, and Rumau-ari'i feared for its survival; however, it eventually sprouted new shoots, and the tree survived. From Rā'iatea, breadfruit spread to the neighboring islands of Taha'a, Bora Bora, and then to all the islands through-

out Polynesia. Local legends on Rā'iatea maintain that up until the twentieth century, the original tree was still growing by the sacred temple of Taputapuātea near the modern village of 'Opoa. Today, tour agents will often point to a nearby breadfruit tree, briefly tell the story of Rua-ta'ata, and maintain that it is the original tree brought here from the valley of Tua-'uru on the island of Tahiti.

Also, the word 'uru is no longer used in modern Tahitian to refer to one's head. After King Noho-ari'i's death, his successor took the name Mahuru (using the suffix 'uru), and in deference to his royal station, 'uru was forever banned as a meaning for "head"; a new word, *upo'o*, was substituted instead. 'Uru, however, continues to be the Tahitian term for breadfruit, and in Hawaiian it is called 'ulu.

There are several Hawaiian stories telling of the origin of the breadfruit that mirror details of the Tahitian legend. One from the Big Island tells of a man named 'Ulu who died from a famine. The local priests ordered his family to bury his body near a small stream of water. The next morning, the family awoke to find a mature breadfruit tree growing outside their hut, and the fruit provided food to nourish the family and thus alleviated the devastating famine.

Breadfruit can be roasted or steamed, and after it is peeled, it can be eaten as is or prepared in several ways. The taste resembles that of the potato. Tahitians frequently mash it up with bananas and eat it like the Hawaiians do their poi (made of mashed-up taro), or Tahitians mash it up and then dip it into warm coconut milk. Breadfruit can also be sliced thin and deep fried; add salt, and you have something similar to potato chips. In addition to the fruit, ancient Polynesians used the trunks of the tree for heavy beams in house construction or for their large outrigger canoe hulls. The inner bark of its branches was pounded out by the women into tapa cloth, and its resin was used to caulk canoe seams and to ensnare small birds. Even its large leaves were used for many everyday chores—as wrappings for food or other household items, for example. Because of its popularity, it is not surprising that the tree is mentioned so frequently in so many Polynesian legends of their gods, goddesses, and heroes.

**See also** Coconut, Origin of the; Fire; Hina; Plants (Food); Tī Plant

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**CALENDAR**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Unlike many peoples of the world, most Polynesians had little or no interest in the reckoning of time. Without a written language, detailed information regarding time could not be collected and then passed down to subsequent generations. As a result, most Polynesian languages had no equivalent to our time designations—day and year, for example. Most Polynesians, therefore, soon forgot the ages of their children. Few adults could tell you exactly how old they were. They did, however, have various ways of describing the passing of day and night, the completion of a lunar month of twenty-eight days/nights, and the realization of the passing of another solar year.

The day, of course, was obviously divided between the rising and setting of the sun. The sun provided the Polynesians with a regular and visible astronomical occurrence. Their days consisted of four time periods, but there were no sharp divisions between them. Morning began when there was enough light to be able to distinguish someone else's face in the early twilight. Midday began sometime when the sun was overhead enough to cast its shortest shadow, and midafternoon continued shortly thereafter until the setting of the sun. Night had no divisions because there were no distinguishing phenomena that could aid the Polynesians in calculating time changes. There might have been exceptions especially among priests and more educated persons who may have had more training in the passing of the heavenly constellations and the moon through the sky.

Months, of course, could be naturally observed through the waxing and waning of the moon. Polynesians could tell pretty much which day of the lunar month it was by the size and shape of the moon. The first observable night might be called "breaking-forth," full moon might be called "clear-sky," and the new moon "severed." The moon also determined the rise and fall of the tides, so fishing terms could also be designated for certain days of the month—for example, "when fish hide away," or "when bonito fishing is good."

The passing of a year was determined several ways. First by the rising of the Pleiades (Seven Sisters) constellation on the horizon at dusk, which began the new year or the season of plenty (late November), and the setting of the constellation, which ended the season of plenty (late May). The ripening of the various species of breadfruit at different times of the year also provided the Polynesians with the concept of the passing of another year, and some island groups distinguished six different periods during the annual breadfruit cycle. In order to reconcile the lunar and solar years, the Polynesians had thirteen lunar months; one month would be "thrown away" when the lunar year did not coincide with the annual rising of the Pleiades (the solar year). The names of the thirteen lunar months consisted of "when harvest is coming in," "when bread-



*Illustration 3.4: A wooden tablet from Easter Island with rongorongo inscriptions, the only written language ever created in ancient Polynesia. It may have developed on the island after a Spanish visit in 1770, and after 1860, it ceased to be used and became extinct. Several modern scholars, however, have proposed various decipherments. (© The British Museum Institution Reference: Ethno, 1903-150/Heritage Image Partnership)*

fruit is scarce," "the rainy month," "when the leaves turn yellow and brown," and so forth.

Polynesians were little concerned about time and its passing. Some talked of the phases of the moon, while others made reference to the rainy season or to the period of a certain type of breadfruit. It is not surprising, therefore, that communication regarding specific times between one person and another could often be ambiguous and imprecise.

There is one exception regarding the previous statement about the absence of a written Polynesian language. The Easter Islanders apparently had begun the process of creating a written language when the first Westerner, Father Eugène Eyraud, settled on the island in 1864. He wrote to his superiors that he had found hundreds of wooden tablets and staffs incised with thousands of hieroglyphic figures. Unfortunately, most of these tablets were destroyed within a short time, and today, only 26 have survived. One in particular is significant to this entry on the calendar. It is the Mamari tablet, measuring 11.3 inches (290 millimeters) in length and 7.6 inches (196 millimeters) in width, which contains hieroglyphs on both of its sides. Although there are doubts regarding the exact translation of these tablets, modern scholars agree that lines 6 to 8 on side A of the Mamari tablet reveal a lunar calendar consisting of twenty-eight basic "nights." If this is



so, then the Marmari tablet represents the only textual calendar found in all of Polynesia. (See Illustration 3.4.)

**See also** Hina; Māui; Moon, Origin of; Pleiades (Matariki); Schools of Education; Stars; Sun God

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## **CANNIBALISM AND HUMAN SACRIFICES**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Archaeological and eyewitness accounts testify that both cannibalism and human sacrifices were practiced throughout the Pacific islands, perhaps dating well back into ancient times. To the early European navigators who first sailed the Pacific in more modern times, these remote islands were often referred to as “The Cannibal Islands.” Their reasoning was obvious. After years of exploration, however, most of the navigators came to recognize that the Polynesian islanders were friendlier than their neighbors to the west—the Melanesians, for example. As a result, the Polynesian islands became the most favored stopover for foreign sailing ships in the Pacific.

Even so, most of the Polynesian islanders practiced both cannibalism and human sacrifices prior to European intrusion, although the practice was not common nor was it the type normally associated with those practiced in other parts of the world. One prominent Pacific anthropologist maintains that probably less than one-tenth of the islands actually practiced cannibalism, not as a food source but as a means of punishment or revenge upon their enemies. Tahitian and Hawaiian legends have references to cannibalism, but there is no evidence that Tahitians or Hawaiians practiced it themselves. To the other Polynesians, however, cannibalism was the supreme act of defiance over their enemies, and apparently it was the dead enemy that provided the source for both human sacrifices and cannibalism. Bodies of the slain were used as human sacrifices in the *marae* or *heiau* (open-air temples) or cooked and eaten by the victors as the highest form of revenge. “I will roast you” was the greatest insult spoken by a Samoan. Another reason for eating one’s enemy was to absorb any good qualities of that enemy, such as their desirable attributes, skills, or magical powers.

Human sacrifices were common, and most were associated with certain religious ceremonies held in the temples, such as the celebration of a victory over



*Illustration 3.5: Human sacrifice to the Tahitian god 'Oro. Drawing by John Webber on Captain Cook's third voyage around the world, 1777. The intended sacrifice is tied to a pole on the ground, while a pile of human skulls is visible in the background.*  
(© The British Library/Heritage Image Partnership)

one's enemy, the investiture of a new high chief, or perhaps a sacrifice to help a sick chief or priest become well. In Polynesia, there was no sacrificial slaying of live humans upon an altar—a practice found in some cultures of the world. Polynesians sacrificed humans who were already dead. When a sacrifice was needed, however, there were times when a live human was chosen, although in most cases it was a prisoner of war or an undesirable member of the community. Women were not deemed appropriate for these sacrifices. The designated person was killed unknowingly by a blow to the back of the neck to prevent any disfiguration to the rest of the body. The body would then be wrapped in palm fronds and carried to the temple, where the priest would place it on the high altar. After the appropriate prayers and rites, the body would either be buried or left to decompose in the open air. Months later, the skull would be cleansed and placed on exhibit around the altar. John Webber, one of Captain Cook's artists, left an impressive sketch of a human sacrifice in a *marae* during his visit to Tahiti in 1777 (see Illustration 3.5).

References to both cannibalism and human sacrifices abound in Polynesian legends. The most infamous cannibal is Whaitiri, the goddess grandmother to the great hero Tāwhaki (Tahaki), who, in his attempt to rescue his father, visits his grandmother and restores her sight. There is also an interesting legend from Sāmoa that tells how cannibalism first began there. In the distant past, the great cannibal god Maniloa dwelt in a deep ravine and used to shake its bridge as humans passed in order to cause them to fall to their death. Maniloa would then devour them. Several young Samoans, however, found a way around the bridge, and attacked and killed Maniloa, whereupon, his spirit entered into the young men and caused them to acquire his taste for human flesh. In Hawai'i, it is the god Kū-waha-ilo, father to the volcano goddess Pele, who first introduced human sacrifices and cannibalism to the islands. He appears in several Hawaiian legends and usually descends from the heavens preceded by lightning, thunder, earthquakes, and heavy winds, and generally laps up his victims with his thirsty tongue.

**See also** Ceremonies, Religious; Death; Pele (Pere); Tahaki; Temples; Warfare and War Gods—Kū, 'Oro, Nafanua

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## **CANOES**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

If I was asked to indicate the single most important artifact of the Polynesian people, I would unquestionably reply, “the canoe.” Polynesians were maritime people; they initially explored and peopled one-third of the vast Pacific Ocean over two thousand years ago. They accomplished this remarkable feat by sailing in skillfully crafted, oceangoing canoes, some measuring over a hundred feet in length. Once they had settled these newly found islands and atolls, the sea continued to be part of their daily lives simply because the Polynesians had to live near the shore, and they relied upon its resources to provide food in their daily lives. Also, the ocean was the easiest means of travel and communication between the various districts on their island or between other islands in the archipelago; the canoe was the facilitator of that travel.

When we hear the word “canoe,” we often think only of the small one- or two-man canoes used in fishing in the various streams and small lakes throughout the rest of the world. The Polynesian canoes, however, ranged in size from the small outrigger canoe of perhaps ten to fifteen feet in length to the gigantic sea-voyaging, double-hulled canoes that could measure up to one hundred feet in



*Illustration 3.6: Herb Kane's contemporary painting of a War Pahi of Tahiti. In 1774, Captain Cook reported seeing a gathering of 160 of these war canoes accompanied by 170 smaller canoes, all of which carried no less than 7,760 men. (War Pahi of Tahiti, by Herbert Kawainui Kane)*

length and accommodate at least one hundred people or more. It would be more fitting probably to refer to these larger canoes as “ships” rather than “canoes” in the same way that we do not call a yacht a “boat.” When many of the Western explorers first visited Polynesia and saw these canoes (Captain James Cook, for example), they were struck not only by their immense size, but by the workmanship that had gone into constructing them.

Essentially, most Polynesian canoes were of three types:

- A small dugout constructed from a single felled tree, outfitted with a smaller outrigger support for stability, and used primarily for inshore or lagoon fishing and for transportation around the shoreline of the island. It certainly would not have exceeded more than 20 feet in length.
- A larger dugout with built-up sides, outfitted more often with another dugout of equal size, lashed together, with high upward-curving sterns. These canoes could measure 70 feet in length, and various types of platforms constructed between them could accommodate numerous people.



*Illustration 3.7: An elegantly carved prow from an eighteenth-century Māori war canoe (Tuere), probably from the Hokianga district, North Auckland, New Zealand. The panel has openwork carving on both sides and rolling spirals on the elongated figures, a style very popular in the north. (© The British Museum. Institution Reference: Ethno, 1900.7-21.1/Heritage Image Partnership)*

- A double-hulled, composite-plank keeled canoe made of internal ribs over which were placed wooden planks fastened together by stitching or lashing with sennit (coconut-fiber rope). The seams and any holes were plugged by using caulking made from the sap of the breadfruit tree. These double-hulled “catamarans” were then finished by constructing various wooden platforms between them where the passengers could sit, cook, and sleep. Often protective canopies and/or small huts, made of palm fronds, were also built on top of the platform. Ships this size often averaged 30 to 100 feet in length and 35 feet in width. Captain Cook observed one Tahitian war canoe that accommodated 100 fighters, and George Vason claims (1810) to have seen one in Tonga that carried 250 individuals. (See Illustration 3.6.) Outfitted with food and other provisions, this type of canoe could

sail the open ocean for 30 days before needing to restock its supplies. Most likely, it is this type of canoe that made most of the long-distance voyages between the various island groups of Polynesia.

Most of the small canoes in Polynesia were utilitarian and did not warrant decorations of any kind, but the larger, more formal canoes sported various types of decorations. The prows of the double-hulled canoes, for example, almost always extended to a great height (some twenty-six feet high) and were decorated with streamers made of sennit and feathers. The Māoris of New Zealand hand carved enormous prows and sterns with intricate geometric designs and human-like figures (see Illustrations 3.7 and 3.8). Sometimes additional carvings were added down the top narrow beading on each of the outer hulls. The prows, sterns, and beading were generally painted black with splashes of white and decorated with white feathers.

#### BOAT TRAVEL

All Polynesian canoes could be propelled either by human paddlers or by sail. A small, one-man dugout would not normally have a sail; its forward movement came completely from paddling. Even the larger canoes, including the great war canoes, could be maneuvered by the use of paddlers, but on most other occasions, the canoes sped forward in the water by the use of sails. Sails were made of fine woven mats in the form of an inverted triangle or in the form of a crab's claw and lashed to masts rising from the centers of the hulls. Polynesians were experts in steering their ships by means of the stars, the sun, the swells of the ocean waves, the winds, the birds, and the clouds, and a seagoing vessel could easily make 100 to 150 miles a day. Round-trips of over 2,000 miles were recorded in ancient Polynesian legends and stories.

#### CANOE BUILDING

Constructing a canoe was a sacred ritual in which prayers and sacrifices were required. Most of the timber for canoe building came from forests that grew only on the upper slopes of the mountains. Timber such as the tall *kamani* (*Colophyllum inophyllum*), ironwood, breadfruit, mango, coconut palm, or even the hibiscus could be used. Once it had been decided to fell a tree or gather wood for a canoe, certain individuals would be designated for the task, and they would be held sacred or taboo while they were at their task. Canoe builders were usually male, but sometimes women helped with the less skillful tasks. Prayers would be invoked to the various gods—Kāne (Tāne), Ta'ere, Tangaloa (Ta'aroa), Kū, and so forth—and then the workers would set out to find the proper trees. Once a tree had been found, it was often observed for days before any cutting began. A





*Illustration 3.8: A decorative carving on the stern of a Māori canoe named Ngātokimatawhaorua, which at 36 meters (117 feet) is the world's longest. (Nik Wheeler/CORBIS)*

priest would observe to see if any flycatcher bird would light upon the tree and peck at certain portions of it. If it did, then that tree was determined to be hollow or possibly rotten. Once a tree was approved, other sacred rituals and prayers followed, and then the tree was felled. Most often, trees were dragged down the mountains to shore, where they were customarily finished. If the tree was huge, however, much of the hollowing out or making timber planks was done on site. The single most important tool of the canoe builders was the stone adz, for metal was unknown to the Polynesians, and specific prayers were invoked to the gods to bless the builders' tools during construction. One particular moving chant comes from Tahiti:

Go and take hold of the axe  
 In the aperture in Havai'i [the sacred temple where the axe was stored];  
 Hold, that it be taken out [of its place in the temple] enchanted,  
 Made light; that it may produce sparks  
 In doing varied work.

It is whetted with fine sand,  
Made smooth with loose-grained sand,  
It is set in a firm handle of sacred miro [ironwood],  
United with many-stranded sennit of [the god] Tane.  
The axe will become sacred  
In the brilliant sennit of the artisan,  
Which touches and holds  
As a girdle for the axe,  
For the handle of the axe,  
The back of the axe,  
To make one the axe and the handle,  
To make light the axe,  
To consecrate the axe,  
To impel the axe,  
To complete the axe,  
To give power to the axe. (Henry 1928, 146–147)

Usually, the canoe builders constructed sheds at the seashore to protect the workers and the emerging canoe. Once the canoe was completed, a great feast would be held to “christen” and name the canoe. It was decked out with fine tapa cloth, mats, and feathers, and then the villagers would make their way to the temple, where prayers and sacrifices were offered for the proper dedication of the canoe. In some instances, a human sacrifice was made, and in others, the sacrifice was merely a pig. Afterwards, the canoe was pushed onto rollers and launched into the sea. Priests, of course, were on hand to offer whatever particular chants and prayers were needed. Polynesians always offered benedictory prayers when they set out on important journeys and then gave prayers of thanksgiving when they reached their destination.

**See also** Kāne; Migrations; Rata or Laka; Tāne

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**CEREMONIES, RELIGIOUS**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Every religion has its rituals, rites, and ceremonies that are performed periodically to mark certain significant events in the life of a community or of an individual. Similar to other peoples, the Polynesians employed their priests to organize and perform most of these ceremonies. Yet, on other occasions, the ordinary Polynesian could personally recite a wide variety of personal charms and invocations to bring good luck or ward off evil.

Priests used a number of natural objects to accompany their incantations, such as colorful bird feathers, human or animal blood, plantain (banana) shoots, rosewood leaves and branches, tī plants, and seawater. The most widely used were the red and yellow feathers from the colorful, tropical birds found on the islands. These highly prized feathers, they say, were favorites of the gods, and the priests gained their attention by waving one or several of the feathers tied at the end of a stick high in the air during their religious ceremonies. Human blood was required for certain “national” rituals. On other occasions, blood from animals (especially pigs) could substitute for the human variety. In both cases, the blood would be smeared over the statues of gods or over other sacrifices on the altars. The mixing of blood between two parties also signified the sealing of an important compact or pledge between them. Young shoots of the plantain signified “peace,” and they were often laid at the foot of another to show one’s humility and peaceful intentions. Long shoots of the plantain were sometimes used in lieu of a human sacrifice. The Pacific rosewood plant (*Thespesia populnea*) was especially favored by the gods, who often spoke to humans through the rustling of its leaves in the trees. Priests also waved sprigs of this plant above their heads during their invocations to gain the attention of the gods. The tī plant (*Cordyline terminalis*) was equally as sacred, and it and the rosewood were always found growing around the open-air temples. Leaves of the tī plant were used as coverings for the god images, as wrappings for various types of sacrifices, and for a variety of other purposes. Seawater was another vital element in religious services. Priests sprinkled it over objects or persons, or larger amounts of it were used for bathing or immersion. Seawater apparently invested the person with sacredness (*tapu*) as well as removing the sacredness from a *tapu* person. Last but not least were bones. Very often, skulls of deceased warriors, ancestors, or high chiefs were used to communicate with the spirits beyond this life. Skulls and bones also became the vehicles through which a departed spirit could speak to individuals in the physical world.

Besides these natural objects, there were other handmade objects that were used in religious ceremonies—images of the gods (tiki), finely woven mats, sen-nit (rope), tapa cloth, drums, and other paraphernalia. God images, of course, were

of great importance when a ceremony involved the general public or was performed for the high chiefs of the island. These images insured that these special ceremonies were endowed with great authority (*mana*). Woven mats, sennit, and tapa cloth were needed for wrapping sacred articles or for ground covering for the priests and participants in the ceremonies. No religious festival could be performed without the assistance of drums. Various sizes and methods of playing were used for different functions. The great drum of the high priest signified the beginning of a religious ceremony. Other temple drums were played on various occasions, depending upon the purpose of the ceremonies, and a slowly beaten base drum signaled the beginning of a ceremony that required a human sacrifice.

Religious ceremonies also required certain physical acts of contrition on the part of the participants. Prostration was required of everyone in the presence of a god image (with the exception of the officiating priests, of course). Baring of one's upper torso to the waist, crouching, or kneeling were all similar signs of humility and contrition. Often a "sinner" would tie a rope around his neck and symbolically offer himself before the god to ask for forgiveness. During some ceremonies, such as the death of a high chief or one's close relative or even marriage, an individual would take a heavy instrument imbedded with sharks' teeth and then make deep cut marks either in the head or on some other part of the body. This symbolized either great grief or joy. Often two individuals would cut themselves and commingle their blood in order to solemnize a mutual compact before the priest. Contrarily, it could also signify the dissolution of a compact. Unwanted spirits or demons could be eliminated by burying certain objects while chanting a charm or token, or on other occasions, they could be eliminated by sending an object out to sea in an unmanned canoe. A third attempt would be the burning of the object thought to have been responsible for the bad luck or the bad spirit.

Polynesians participated in many religious ceremonies throughout their lifetimes. The nobility, of course, generally were parties to more of these than commoners. When a chief's first son was born, for example, numerous religious ceremonies were performed. A high-ranking, pregnant woman was moved to a separate birthing house where she was attended to by numerous female companions. Priests would surround the hut and offer up innovations to bring relief to the mother. These chants were offered to Hina, the moon goddess and the goddess of childbearing. Often the genealogical pedigrees of the mother and father were chanted in order to give import to their supplications. Other religious ceremonies occurred when the child's umbilical cord was first cut and then when the cord fell off. The officiating priest held the child in his arms and chanted certain supplications that would endow the child with excellent qualities and that would bring the child good fortune in life. The priest would use a combination

of twigs, leaves, and water in the ceremonies. Marriages between chiefly classes also required elaborate ceremonies. (Commoners hardly observed any marriage ceremony.) Usually a large feast was held, during which the bride and groom were brought forward, and the priest then recited different charms and invocations while waving sacred objects over their heads. These invocations would help ward off evil spirits and protect the couple in their marriage, impart a sacredness to the occasion, and cause their union to produce healthy progeny.

Sickness and death both required elaborate rituals. Polynesians believed that sickness was caused by the gods. (Sometimes, however, it could have been caused by a sorcerer; and in that case, the rituals became even more elaborate.) A sick person would appear before the priest to seek aid. After inquiring, the priest would give the patient a certain twig or branch from a sacred tree with the advice that the patient should tap the sick part of the body with the twig while saying certain prayers. Some had no meaning while others were names of holy or sacred (*tapu*) places known to the patient. It was thought that by repeating certain sacred words, the gods would take away the patient's suffering. On other occasions, the priest would take a reed (twig or branch), place its end on the body of the patient, and then repeat "Here is your path; go to your ancestors; go to your parents; go to your elders; go to the mana of your ancestors" (Best 1995, 372). This was done in the belief that the twig or branch would allow the evil spirit an exit out of the body of the patient. Headaches, they say, could be cured by the priest chanting certain spells while waving a cooked fern root over the sufferer's head. Needless to say, many different chants and solutions were required by the priest in diagnosing the cure of his numerous patients.

Death required many mourning ceremonies. Even before death, the priest was usually summoned to aid in one's final moments. Friends and relatives surrounded the hut and offered up their mournful cries of farewell. The priest recited prayers at the time of death to assist the soul in passing from this life into the spirit world. Upon death, the body would be placed upright in a sitting position against a post for several days for the required mourning rites. Friends and close relatives would visit and lacerate parts of their body as a token of their affection and sorrow. The priest would continue his invocations to prevent the spirit from returning from the spirit world in the form of a ghost or a lost spirit. Little is known regarding burial rites since this sacred ceremony was done totally in secret so that no one would know where the body had been laid to rest.

War also required many elaborate ceremonies. When war was declared, priests were responsible for performing those sacred duties that would bring triumph and glory to the tribe. The warriors' weapons were brought before the priest so that he could render them more effective through his blessings. The weapons were then returned to the warriors, who often placed them close to

their lips and inhaled the sacredness they now possessed. Then the warriors would strip nude before a stream of water so that the priest could perform a rite of protection over them. He would take a branch and leaves of the *Coprosma* plant, dip it into the water, and then tap each warrior on the right shoulder while he recited his war chant. This ceremony dedicated each of the warriors to the war god (usually Tū or Kū) and rendered them *tapu* for the length of battle. While battles waged, priests on both sides usually chanted prayers in their loudest voices so that their compatriots could hear and be inspired to victory. After the battle, priests offered up prayers over the slain as well as the victors. Returning to their home districts, the warriors would appear before the priest again so their sacredness (*tapu*) could be lifted before returning to ordinary life.

Religious ceremonies performed on a “national” level were much more elaborate and extensive than the ones already discussed. Two will be briefly described here to show their overall composition. The “First-Fruits Ceremony” was common throughout all of Polynesia and was generally regarded as the most important religious ceremony of the year. It was a time when the first fruits of all produce (plant foods as well as fish) were presented to the gods as an offering so that the gods would look favorably upon them as a people. In Tonga, the ceremony was called the *inasi*, in Tahiti the *parara’a matahiti* (ripening of the year), and in Hawai’i the *makahiki*. In Tonga, the event was held the first week in October, but preparations for the event had already been under way for several months. Although yams were the chief product emphasized during the *inasi*, other items had been gathered—tapa cloth, fine mats, colorful ribbons, flour, bananas, dried fish—all of which were designated for the gods but were given to the Tu’i Tonga (King of Tonga), whom everyone believed was divine. On the day of the *inasi*, the whole island was filled with people bringing their goods to the great *mala’e* (open area) in front of the tomb of one of the Tu’i Tonga. There the chiefs and their spokesmen formed a large semicircle, bowed their heads, and clasped their hands in front of them. The ceremonial procession of the yams then began. Young men carried the large yams, individually wrapped on a tall pole, into the semicircle. All the while, the older men followed singing the *inasi* song “Rest thou, do no work; thou shalt not work.” After all had been assembled, the speaker for the king addressed the gods and the Tu’i Tonga and gave them thanks for the bountiful harvest that was forthcoming. Especially named were each of the high chiefs who sat within the circle. Conch shells sounded and the chiefs dispersed into the crowd. The Tu’i Tonga was then given the responsibility of dividing the goods among his subjects. The gods were given one-fourth, the Tu’i Tonga one-fourth, and the secular high chief (the Hau) one-half. A kava circle of the high chiefs completed the ceremonies, after which there was feasting, merrymaking, and sports for everyone the rest of the day.

The Tahitian religious ceremony called the *paiatua* was purely religious in nature. Essentially, it was the public revealing of the god images stored in the sacred houses in the *marae* (open-air temples), a ceremony very similar to the parading of Christian saints' statues through the streets on high holy days. The *paiatua* was convened only upon the most sacred of occasions—the inauguration or sickness of a high chief, for example—and much preparation was needed. Food had to be gathered, the religious leaders had to prepare themselves spiritually, and the *marae* and god images all had to be prepared. Two days before the evening of the ceremony, messengers went around the island announcing the forthcoming event. At nightfall, *marae* drums began their occasional beating to announce the cessation of all ordinary activities. The next day was devoted to cleansing the *marae* and making last-minute preparations. The priests sat chanting their devotions to the gods while bathing and cleaning the statues that were to be unwrapped and revealed the following day. On the given day, the ceremonies started with the high priest leading a procession to the *marae*. The various god images were carried by subordinate priests into the *marae* in their individually covered boxes. When all had assembled (women could not be present, and only priests sat within the walls of the *marae*), the high priest took the wrappings off each of the gods and exposed them to all those gathered. Everyone, of course, lay prostrate upon the ground before such spiritual power as manifested through the images. Finally, the main god was uncovered and placed in a conspicuous place high up on the *ahu* (altar) of the *marae*. Then, each subordinate priest carried a lesser god and presented it before the high priest and the main god. Red feathers were exchanged, and the lesser god was then reinfused with mana and power. Afterwards, a sacred male pig was offered to the gods along with a prayer of atonement. Each of the gods was then rewrapped with new tapa cloth and placed in its house. Finally, an invocation was offered by the high priest that released the participants from their sacredness. A huge feast followed—the laity having gone to their own villages while the priests remained at the *marae*. Then the high priest offered a final benediction that closed the whole affair:

Let sacredness remain here that we may become ordinary.  
O host of gods, those thousands of gods!  
We are returning to our homes to put on unconsecrated clothes,  
To do domestic war, caress, farm and become ordinary.  
Be not farsighted, be not farhearing to us.  
Turn your faces to darkness, and turn your back to the light.  
We are leaving sacredness, let holiness be there [with you],  
O gods. (Henry 1928, 176–177)

**See also** Drums; God Images; Kava; Mana; Marriage; Plants (Food); Priests; Sorcery; *Tapu*; Temples; Ti Plant; Underworld; Warfare and War Gods—Kū, 'Oro, Nafanua

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## CHIEFLY CLASS

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Polynesian societies were generally divided into three major classes—commoners, a middle class, and a chiefly class. Polynesian chiefs, called *ari'i*, *aliki*, *alike*, *ali'i*, or *'eiki*, claimed lineal descent from the ancient gods, and as a result, these chiefs assumed powers unequal to any other rulers in the Pacific Ocean or in the Southeast Asian countries in the same time period. Their powers were comparable to those held by the ancient emperors of Japan or by the early modern European kings who proclaimed to rule by “divine right.” The position of *ali'i nui* (great *ali'i*) in Hawai'i, for example, was so divine that brother and sister marriages were common so that their impeccable, royal pedigrees could be preserved.

Exact powers of the ruling chiefs, of course, varied from one island group to another, but usually the larger, volcanic islands, containing large populations, such as Hawai'i, Tahiti, Sāmoa, Tonga, and New Zealand, for example, were generally the most stratified and regulated. Chiefs in these islands were surrounded by elaborate rituals and reverence, and they commanded the power of life and death over their subjects. Chiefly status on the small, far-flung atolls, however, was usually more egalitarian, but even here rank and status were recognized.

Chieftainship, of course, implies some sort of political power of one group over another. In Polynesia, this political power was divided among various chiefs who ruled certain geographical divisions of land. In almost all cases, there existed no single ruler who ruled a whole island chain. (Tonga was an exception.) In other words, there were actually no Polynesian “kings.” Each of the high, volcanic islands in Polynesia was politically divided into geographical sections resembling pie slices with the tip of the “pie” at the top of the inland mountains and the larger outer edge along the shore. Essentially, all members of such sections of land belonged to a single tribe and were usually related to some degree. The general population lived in isolated huts or sometimes in

scattered hamlets—there were no large villages or towns. All members of the tribe had access to the ocean for fishing, the inland valleys for agriculture and fresh water, and the mountains for hunting.

Each division was ruled over by a tribal chieftain whose status was based primarily on hereditary right, but this genealogical claim was frequently backed by physical and ritual force. The basic right to rule was based upon primogeniture. The ruling chief was usually the eldest son of an eldest son, and his genealogical pedigree could be traced back to their original tribal ancestor or even to the gods. First-born sons were regarded as a distinct class. They were given special treatment as children, because they were destined to be chiefs. They were superior, sacred, and oftentimes called *akua* (gods). In New Zealand, the Tumu-whakare (greatest *ariki* and head of a clan) was so sacred he could do nothing at all. His younger brother had to do all of his work. Similar situations existed elsewhere. In Tahiti, for example, the *ari'i nui* (great ruler) had to be carried on a dais because all lands he stepped upon would become his own personal property. His name was so sacred that it was forbidden to be spoken or ever used during his lifetime. In Tonga, everyone had to strip down to their waists and sit cross-legged on the ground when the Tu'i Tonga (king of Tonga) approached. His marriage and burial ceremonies were much different from anyone else's, and there was even a special form of speech that was required to be spoken only in his presence.

Although male descent was the general rule, the first-born daughter was recognized as having powers of her own, and with them she might claim higher rank than the ruling chief. In New Zealand, for example, she was called the Tapiru, and being the first-born, she assumed the duties of the high priestess of the tribe. She participated in all ceremonies and religious rites usually forbidden (*tapu*) to all other women. Although she could not enter the *whare-kura* (sacred schools of education) as a child, she was tutored by a high priest in a special location not far away. She was so sacred, no one could eat in her presence.

In Tonga, genealogical rank was inherited through the mother, and the oldest sister of the Tu'i Tonga could sometimes outrank her brother. In early historical times, the princess Sinaitakala outranked her younger brother, the Tu'i Tonga, and she ruled jointly with him. She married a Fijian, and her two daughters and one son were still considered higher ranking than the succeeding Tu'i Tonga, although they did not rule. A similar situation occurred in Tahiti in the late eighteenth century. Chief Tavi held supreme political authority over the island. Once after a war, he demanded that everyone recognize a *tapu* on the eating of pork for one whole year. In opposition, chieftainess Tetuaehuri, from a neighboring district, claimed higher genealogical rank than the chief and refused to recognize the *tapu*. Tavi was furious and declared war. His invading forces were utterly crushed by the opposition. Tetuaehuri's son Teu inherited his



mother's titles and became the highest-ranking chief on the island. His son, Pomare I, became Tahiti's first crowned "king."

Although genealogical status determined basic ranking, often ambition and personality brought a junior line to the fore. Polynesians believed that everyone possessed a certain "spiritual" power called *mana*. Much of it could be inherited from powerful ancestors, but an equal amount could be assumed through heroic deeds done in this life. High chiefs were expected to exhibit the greatest degree of *mana* through their bravery, courage, intelligence, and generosity. Sometimes a dying chief would pass over his eldest son in favor of a younger son whom he thought best to rule. That son would then inherit his father's *mana*. Frequent Polynesian wars also caused major disruptions in the traditional line of succession. A case in point is the meteoric rise of chief Kamehameha I (ca. 1758–1819) from the island of Hawai'i. Born of chiefly status, he skillfully trained in the arts of warfare throughout his younger years. After the death of the highest-ranking ruler of the island, Kamehameha went to war against the legitimate heir to the title. Because of his military prowess, Kamehameha defeated his rival and gained the title of high chief. From there, he went on to establish sovereignty over all of the other Hawaiian islands by right of conquest. Meanwhile, Europeans had begun to settle in the islands, and the designation of *ali'i nui* was then converted into the Western title of "king."

Theoretically, high chiefs held possession of all the land, and they parceled it out among their subchiefs, who then parceled it out among the commoners. When a high chief died or when there was a victory in battle, the land would be divided again among the new ruler's faithful followers. Commoners owed periodical tribute for the use of this land, tribute they usually paid in kind, such as food products, bark cloth (*tapa*), finely woven mats, and colorful feathers. On other occasions, the chiefs demanded labor services (*corvée*) from them to assist in preparing ceremonial festivals, in building roads, temples, irrigation ditches, or in a multitude of other jobs that needed to be done. Commoners had little say in the communal work that was required by the chiefs.

In ancient times, all members of a tribe knew exactly their social ranking. The population was small and there was little changing of boundary lines. As time went by, the expanding population, the interconnection of family pedigrees, and war increased so much that there were too many lineages to be remembered by all. There was an exception, of course, and that was among the chiefly class, who hired professional court genealogists to memorize, maintain, and recite their lengthy pedigrees when the occasion arose. After all, status depended upon it. A Polynesian scholar once told me that these pedigree keepers often would "clean up" lineages for the victorious chiefs in order to make them more "respectable" and "acceptable."



**See also** Arioi Society; Genealogies; Land; Mana; Priests; *Tapu*; Warfare and War Gods—Kū, 'Oro, Nafanua

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## COCONUT, ORIGIN OF THE

Cultural Area: All of Polynesia

No other plant contributes as much material to support Polynesian life than the coconut palm, a tree that is common to the tropics around the world (see Illustration 3.9). In Polynesia, its trunk provides wooden posts for house structures; its fronds supply plaited mats for roof coverings and for woven baskets; the inner husks of the coconut fruit provide sennit (twine) to lash house pillars, canoe supports, tools, and spears together; the nuts themselves can be used for cups and bowls for drinking or carrying liquids; and of course the flesh inside the nuts provides coconut milk and meat for flavoring foods.

Legends concerning the origin of this important tree are widespread throughout Polynesia, with the most popular ones originating from Sāmoa and Tonga. These stories tell of an eel god that once lived in a pool of water at the foot of a mountain in Tonga. Nearby lived a couple who had a beautiful young daughter named Sina (Hina), whom some say was a princess. After constantly seeing Sina's beauty while she bathed in his pool every day, the eel became infatuated with her, assumed the form of a man, and seduced her. Sina became pregnant and decided to visit the pool to tell her lover, the eel. When she reached the pool, the eel told her that a great flood would sweep over the village that very night and destroy most of the houses except hers. The eel said he would swim to her threshold and that she must have someone cut off his head and bury it near her hut. "Soon," he continued, "a tree will sprout and grow from my head in the ground, but no one should touch its leaves or branches. After three years, the tree will produce clusters of fruit, called coconuts, and each will bear the resemblance of my face—two eyes and a nose" (see Illustration 3.10). The eel then instructed Sina on the use of the various parts of the tree. The liquid inside its fruit could be used for drinking, the flesh of the nut eaten for food or squeezed to make milk, the husk for sennit, and the rest of the tree for many other necessities. "When the nuts are old," he said, "you can squeeze the meat inside and obtain an exotic oil that you can use to anoint yourself and the young daughter



*Illustration 3.9: A coconut palm tree, common throughout Polynesia. Its various parts are used for food and materials to build houses, ropes, baskets, and tools. (Robert D. Craig)*

that you will soon bear.” The eel bade her farewell and took his leave. Sure enough, the flood came as expected and Sina carried out all of her instructions. This is how the coconuts first came to Tonga.

A Tahitian legend has some elements that are similar to its counterpart in Tonga and Sāmoa and others that are drastically different. The beautiful Princess Hina, it says, was born of the highest-ranking nobility in Tahiti, and the sun and moon gods arranged a marriage between her and the king of Lake Vaihiria in southern Tahiti. On her wedding day, she and her flower-bedecked attendants made their way up into the valley to meet her chosen husband, who turned out to be a monstrous eel. Seeing her prospective husband approach, Hina fled in horror and sought refuge at the home of the mighty hero Māui. He took pity upon the young maiden, baited his fishhook, and caught the eel with his magical fishing pole. Māui then hacked the eel to pieces, wrapped up his head in tapa cloth, and delivered it to Hina with instructions that she should “plant” the head once



*Illustration 3.10: A husked coconut showing its “eyes” and “mouth” that resemble the face of an eel. (Robert D. Craig)*

she got home. He also warned her that she should not lay the package down until she reached home.

On the way, however, Hina stopped at a local pool to bathe and, forgetting Māui’s instructions, laid the package down. Immediately, the “package” began sprouting roots and a trunk and within a short time had grown into a large coconut tree, the first of its kind ever seen on earth. Hina was distraught at having disobeyed Māui, but a local woman took her into her home and introduced Hina to her two sons. Hina eventually married the first son and

gave birth to a daughter, whom they called Te-ipo-o-te-marama (Pet of the moon). By this time, the coconut tree had matured, and everyone enjoyed its many benefits. Not too long after this, however, Hina’s husband died, and she decided to marry his brother, who resembled her first husband in many ways. Hina then gave birth to another beautiful daughter she named Te-ipo-o-te-here (Pet who loved).

One day, the two sisters were gathering coconuts when they were caught up by the gods on a rainbow. They were transported to the island of Ana’a in the Tuamotus. The youngest of the two girls, however, displeased the gods, who carried her away into the clouds, and she was never heard of again. The other sister, Te-ipo-o-te-marama, took up residence on Ana’a, where she planted her coconut, and from that one planting, coconut palm trees spread throughout the whole Pacific. Local traditions maintain that Te-ipo-o-te-marama’s tree was still standing when the cyclone of 8 February 1906 tore it asunder and washed it out to sea. Hina, we are told, lived happily ever after with her husband in Tai’arapu, the mountainous peninsula that juts out from Tahiti’s southeast coast, better known as Tahiti-iti (small Tahiti).

**See also** Breadfruit, Origin of; Hina; Māui; Plants (Food)

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**DANCE**

Cultural Group: All of  
Polynesia

Polynesians have always loved to dance. It is one of their most treasured and unique art forms, and one that is performed at almost every gathering—at birthdays, graduations, marriages, inaugurations, picnics, family reunions, political rallies, religious ceremonies, and so forth. Dances are performed singly or in groups of both men and women and are executed either spontaneously or

formally. Audiences worldwide have come to appreciate the diverse character and beauty of these captivating dances, until the Polynesian dance has almost become *the* symbol of the South Seas (see Illustration 3.12).

The first foreigners to visit these islands in the late eighteenth century were the European explorers, and many of them left comments regarding these “strange” dances (see Illustration 3.11). Unfortunately, they did not leave sufficient details so that we can determine the exact nature of the movements of the dancers. Most of their comments were their reactions to what they saw. Some described them as precise, graceful, eloquent, and diverse, while other more prudishly called them obscene, lascivious, violent, immoral, and sexually explicit. Once the Christian missionaries arrived, of course, they banned the dances immediately, and it is surprising that the dances even survived. Some scholars go so far as to suggest that the dances today may not at all resemble the dances that were once performed in “old Polynesia.” Certainly, most of the modern, showbiz-type dances that are performed at night clubs or for Hollywood are not legitimately recognized by most islanders as typical Polynesian dances, yet many outsiders still believe these represent the typical Polynesian dance. Fortunately, some of the classical dances did survive through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in the past thirty years, there has been a renewed interest in these ancient dance forms. At annual dance competitions today, for example, traditional dances are often chosen and preferred, even by the audiences, over those of more modern origin.



*Illustration 3.11: Tahitian dancers as depicted by artist John Webber on his visit to the island in 1777. (Courtesy of A Dance in Otaheiti, an engraving after a sketch by John Webber. London, British Library)*



*Illustration 3.12: Modern Tahitian dancers perform at the Polynesian Cultural Center, Lā'ie, Hawai'i.*  
(Polynesian Cultural Center, Lā'ie, Hawai'i)

Traditional Polynesian dancing has a close affinity with mythology. In some island groups, it is believed to have been first performed anciently by the gods and goddesses. In Hawai'i, for example, the hula was first introduced by the goddess Hōpoe to her friend Hi'iaka, a sister to Pele, the volcano goddess. Near Ke'a-au, in the Puna district of the Big Island of Hawai'i, there is a fallen rock that resembles a dancing figure. Locals claim the rock is the figure of Hōpoe caught by Pele's lava flow while she was still dancing. But it was Pele's other sister, Laka, who later became accepted as the traditional guardian and goddess of the dance. The majority of Hawaiian hulas today are often dedicated to Pele, Hi'iaka, or Laka, and their names can often be heard by

the singers or chanters who accompany the dance. It is said that the main purpose of the hula is to tell the stories of the gods and goddesses and to honor them, and every step of the dance is a prayer or a chant.

In New Zealand, the sun god Tama-nui-te-rā and his wife Hine-raumati (summer maiden) gave birth to Tāne-rore, who is credited with having originated Māori dancing (the *haka*). Tāne-rore is represented by the trembling of the air as often seen on the hot days of summer. This same trembling motion is often duplicated by the dancers' hands when performing the *haka*. Another Māori legend maintains that the great god Rongomai visited the underworld with two companions to learn all kinds of magical charms, songs, and dances from the goddess Miru. Unfortunately, his two companions paid the price demanded by Miru for this knowledge—their lives. Only Rongomai was able to return to the upper world to teach dancing to mortals.

Other Polynesian stories abound with stories of demigods and heroes associated with the dance. In the Tuamotus, for example, two legends tell of the great demigods Hiro and Hono'ura, who both enter dance competitions to gain the kings' daughters as wives. On Mangaia, the god Tautiti presides over the dance (the *tautiti*). He is a brother to the elves and fairies and the originator of



the dance. When mortals dance the *tautiti* today, it is said that these little people often make their appearance, delighted that the *tautiti* is still being performed. Another Mangaian tradition maintains that the mysteries of the dance were first introduced to humankind by Koro, son of the demigod Tinirau, who followed his father one night and observed him “dancing” with the fishes in the sea.

**See also** Arioi Society; Ceremonies, Religious; Drums; Elves and Fairies; Hiro; Pele (Pere); Tinirau; Underworld

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## DEATH

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Most Polynesians believe that death entered the world because the great demigod Māui was unsuccessful in his quest to gain immortality for humans. Unfortunately, his colossal attempt also brought about his own destruction. Since that time, death has been a natural occurrence among humans, and it appears that the ancient Polynesians accepted death much more readily than many world cultures. In 1789, the British explorer William Bligh observed that “It is astonishing what indifference these People speak of Death—it has even appeared to me that they cared little how short their existence was, they are nevertheless afraid of the final stroke, when by War or accident they have reason to expect it; while in disease they are patient and not alarmed” (Bligh ms., 169).

Yet, when death did occur, Polynesians held elaborate and lengthy mourning rituals to commemorate one's passing from this life into the next. In Tahiti, for example, when an individual died of natural causes, a priest quickly prepared the body and its soul for what was to come. He placed an amulet made of red (*'ura*) feathers on the deceased's little fingers to ward off evil spirits and leaves of the sweet scented *maire* (*Alyxia olivaeformis*) plant on his head, for it was believed the head was where the soul left the body. The attending priests then attempted to reunite the soul with the body with their charms and incantations. When they were unsuccessful, they would cry out, “The spirit is drawn out by the gods,” and the death rituals would begin.

The grieving relatives would bathe the body, anoint it with coconut oil, and dress it in its final clothing. In some areas of Polynesia, the attending relatives became *tapu* because they had handled the extremely *tapu* body of the dead. For a length of time, sometimes up to a year, they were forbidden to feed themselves; they had to be fed by their relatives. (See Gottfried Lindauer's painting *Tahunga under Tapu*, Illustration 3.13.)

Then a branch of the sacred *tī* plant was placed beside the body and spikes of the breadfruit tree and banana leaves placed at various locations. The body was kept in the home three to four days, during which time relatives and neighbors visited to help mourn. They would offer various gifts to the family and deliver eulogies about the good life of the deceased.

In most areas of Polynesia, mourning implied weeping, wailing, and self-mutilation. In Tahiti, it was characteristic of the women to provide the weeping, wailing, and beating of breasts around the corpse day and night. The men expressed their grief through various acts of self-mutilation, the degree of which usually was determined by the social class of the deceased. Male mourners beat their cheekbones with their knuckles until bruised and bleeding, or they used clubs, spears, or knives to inflict more severe wounds upon various parts of their bodies. They also used stones to knock out some or all of their teeth—all done in remembrance of the deceased.

This type of mourning lasted three to four days while the body lay at home. Afterwards, the body was transported to the family *marae* (temple), anointed once again, and placed in a temporary hut, guarded by priests. The body was then wrapped in sweet-scented tapa cloth and placed in a type of coffin, which had been hewn out of a tree trunk. Sometime later, the body was moved to a cave in the mountain whose location would forever remain secret. Frequently, the skull of the deceased would be kept by the family as a memento and placed with their other ancestral heirlooms in the sacred places of their homes. Ceremonies for high chiefs, of course, were much more elaborate, *tapus* much longer, mourning more serious, and gifts more expensive.

Most Polynesians believed in some type of life after death, but there are so many contradictions, variations, and inconsistencies within islands and between groups that a single definitive summary is almost impossible. Again, recorded details come from Tahiti that generally summarize these beliefs, beliefs that collectively are called the "journey of the spirit after death." As mentioned above, the soul of the deceased exited out of its head, and its immediate journey depended upon the manner of death. Warriors killed in battle, for example, haunted the battlefield for a period of time; the souls of fishermen who died at sea entered



*Illustration 3.13: Gottfried Lindauer's painting Tohunga under Tapu, depicting a Māori priest who has become so holy after performing funeral rituals that he has to be fed by a family member. (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, gift of Mr. H. E. Partridge, 1915)*



into sharks; those who committed suicide haunted the person responsible for their anguish; and young souls of children became guardians of the home.

The soul remained in the body for three days before exiting. Once it left, it began a journey that took it to Tata'a Point, located on the northwest coast of Tahiti, just south the modern Fa'a'a airport and where the Travel Lodge Hotel now sits. There, souls would find two stones—"life" and "death." If a soul hit upon the "life" stone, it would return back to its body—if "death," then it would continue its journey.

From the sacred bluffs above Tata'a Point, the soul then dove into the ocean and swam to the island of Mo'orea, where it ascended Mount Rotui and then flew to Mount Temehani on the sacred island of Rā'iatea. There, it met the god Tū-ta-horoa and was shown two paths. The one on the right led to the upper region called the *ao* (light) and the other led to the *pō* (darkness). Tū-ta-horoa guided the soul to one or the other. If the soul was guided to the right, the path led to the god Roma-tāne to whom it showed the red feathers given to it by the priests, whereupon, it was allowed to enter the Polynesian "paradise." The left road led to a zone of utter darkness and to the god Ta'aroa-nui-tuhi-mate (Great Ta'aroa Whose Curse Is Death). All souls (including chiefly classes) who wound up here became menial servants to the gods. Not all souls, however, made it to Rā'iatea. Malevolent spirits and ghosts lay in wait along the path to grab any soul they could. The result, of course, was complete annihilation of the soul. It was important, therefore, that the departing spirit have the correct amulets and incantations to help protect it along its journey.

After a year had past, the deceased's relatives held an anniversary observance in which they would plead to the departed soul to return to them once again. Some legends say that the god Ta'aroa would take pity on them and allow some souls to return not as human beings but as guardian spirits to their relatives or as an evil spirit to lie along the paths waiting to strangle and devour the living on their nightly journeys.

**See also** Elves and Fairies; Ghosts; Māui; Sorcery; Tī Plant; Underworld

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**DELUGE**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Stories of massive and destructive floods are found throughout Polynesia. Many of these stories may have been based on actual floods that occurred sometime in the remote past. Catastrophes such as tidal waves and earthquakes are common in the South Pacific; both cause extensive flooding, and both can be extremely disastrous to small low-lying islands. A tidal wave can suddenly wash over an atoll and destroy its entire population. Villagers seeing such oncoming threats might attempt to seek shelter on higher ground (if it can be found), or perhaps they might even think of climbing a tall coconut tree for safety. Survivors of the tragedy most likely would pass on their beliefs of what caused the disaster and the details of their heroic efforts to survive. The high volcanic islands of the Pacific are not as vulnerable as the atolls, but they too have their share of calamities. Villagers on these islands can flee to the mountains when a tidal wave hits, but, of course, ancient Polynesians could not predict the approach of such tidal waves, and the results would have been just as disastrous. A few individuals might survive to tell their children and grandchildren of how they escaped. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions can also cause land or even islands to sink below the ocean. All of these natural events may have been the origin of the many and diverse flood stories found in Polynesian mythology.

Some of these extant stories contain elements that are remarkably similar to the Judeo-Christian account of Noah and his family's survival. These Polynesian legends, of course, helped reinforce the faith of the early Christian settlers to these islands in the nineteenth century. The settlers believed that they had found additional proof of an actual worldwide flood described in the bible. Unfortunately, most of these Polynesian stories have pretty much been debunked by modern scholars, who believe that the Polynesian informants who told these tales were often very willing to offer whatever stories were needed to please these new immigrants, even to the point of making up details the newcomers wished to hear. Nevertheless, many of these suspect stories have survived, and they are currently believed by a great number of residents in the islands today.

In her book *Ancient Tahiti* (1928), the renowned Tahitian scholar Teuira Henry published two flood stories that she says were the most original and free from foreign elements (452). Even in her lifetime, she recognized that some of the stories that had been recorded might be "tainted." Her Tahitian legend (recorded in 1829) claims that once the islands of Tahiti and Mo'orea (sister island to Tahiti) were submerged underwater. No reasons are given for the

disaster. The gods, however, caught up the insects and birds into the heavens and saved them, and the only survivors on earth were a human couple and the animals they could gather up with them. The husband proposed to escape to safety to Tahiti's highest mountain, 'Orohena, but his wife insisted on Pito-hiti, a companion summit next to 'Orohena. Once they reached Mount Pito-hiti, the ocean rose and flooded all the land below them. After ten days, the flood subsided and dry earth began to appear, but destruction and death occurred everywhere. Nothing had survived. The water-soaked mountains began to give way, and landslides threatened the couple. Immediately, the husband dug a cave into the mountain in which they took shelter. For several days, all they could hear were the sounds of landslides and rocks falling all about them. Finally, nothing more was heard, so they opened the entrance and walked out. The earth was dry, but there were no trees, grass, flowers, food plants, or animals. For years they survived only on red clay and fish during which time the couple gave birth to many children, who grew to maturity. The land flourished and was populated once again. A new nation had been born from the one couple, but the land today is still scarred from the landslides, and boulders still cover the landscape.

Henry's second story (recorded in 1822) comes from the sacred island of Rā'iatea, and it differs somewhat from the Tahitian version. In it, two friends, Te-aho-roa and Ro'o, decide to go fishing. They paddle from one spot to another. Without realizing it, they approach the favorite sleeping spot of the ocean god Ruahatu. They drop their stone fishhooks, and one of them hits the head of Ruahatu and wakes him up. Ruahatu angrily grabs their lines and surfaces before the two men. Recognizing what they have done, the two friends apologize profusely to the god. Ruahatu inquires whether they belong to the same tribe as his mortal lover, the Princess Airaro. When they answer in the affirmative, Ruahatu tells them to return home and gather her and all those they can and sail to the small island of Toa-marama, for he plans to inundate the island of Rā'iatea that very evening. The two friends hurry home and tell everyone of the threatening danger. Only the royal family and some of the two fishermen's family believe them. That group boards a boat and sets out for Toa-marama. Meanwhile, all of the insects, birds, and animals are caught up into the heavens by their respective deities, and after night falls, the rushing sound of the incoming waters becomes louder and louder. By midnight, everything is submerged under the sea except Toa-marama. In the morning when the sun rises, the land appears once more, but devastation is everywhere. There are no people, houses, plants, or animals—all is desolate. The people aboard the boat return to their homes, but for many days they are without food

and shelter. Eventually, of course, greenery returns to the islands. The royal family has been preserved, and within a few years, the island is populated as it once was.

The following Māori story, “The Deluge of Para-whenua-mea,” is one of many that illustrate the biblical influence upon Polynesian legends. It declares that the creator god Tāne commissions two representatives, Para-whenua-mea and Tupu-nui-a-uta, to visit mortals on earth and preach his true doctrines, which earthlings have forgotten. The two “evangelists” are mocked and threatened by the people, and after a while, they build a raft with a wooden house upon it with their stone axes. After loading appropriate food and supplies, they pray for rain, which falls until all the land has been covered. Every living creature dies, and the only human survivors are the two “evangelists” and the few men and women who are aboard with them. After eight months adrift, signs appear above their altar on board to indicate that the flood is subsiding. The raft finally lands on a mountain in Hawaiki (ancestral homeland of the Polynesians), and the people go ashore, where they build an altar to offer up their prayers and sacrifices. While they are so engaged, a rainbow (the god Kahukura) appears in the sky.

*See also* Hawaiki; Kāne; Tāne

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## DOGS

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Dogs were not native to the Pacific islands prior to the coming of the Polynesians. They represent one of the three domesticated animals that the Polynesians brought with them as they settled these islands (the pig and fowl were the other two), and they were a different breed from the more common dogs seen today. Some say they resembled the fox with its long, slender body and bushy tail, but that they were less intelligent and had a less sensitive sense of smell. Polynesians raised them for their hunting abilities and for food. They could be trained to catch ground game such as flightless birds and wild pigs, and their skins and tails were highly prized, especially the white-haired ones. Dogs were fattened up on birds, rats, and fish for a source of food, but roasted dog was eaten only by chiefs and other men on rare occasions. It was also *tapu* (forbidden) to women. This ancient breed of dog disappeared with the introduction of new

strains in modern times, although some of its blood may be running through the veins of the mongrels we see in the islands today.

Polynesian mythology tells us that the first dog was created by the demigod Māui. Once he and his brother-in-law, Irawaru, went fishing out on the open ocean. Irawaru happened to catch far more fish than Māui, and as a result, Māui became extremely jealous and distressed. A disagreement over their fishing lines and their bait caused the two to cut the day short and return home. Once on shore, Irawaru helped haul their canoe to land, but Māui pushed so hard that Irawaru was fatally trapped under the outrigger. Māui then stepped forward and chanted magical spells over Irawaru's body, whereupon Irawaru was turned into a dog, the first ever seen in this world. Māui's sister, Hina, was distraught when she learned that Māui had turned her husband into a dog, and in a rage, she gathered up her magical girdle and threw herself into the tempestuous ocean.

Other ancient stories tell of dogs who possessed supernatural powers or who became goblins or monsters and haunted certain locales. The Māori tell of the god Maahu who lived in Lake Te Rotonuiaha and whose bark foretold the impending death of a Māori chief. Another story tells of a chief whose pet dog was killed by a falling tree. The chief commanded his dog's spirit to enter the tree, and ever after, the tree would "bark" whenever travelers stopped and addressed it. The legendary ogres of the South Island, we are told, hunted with ferocious two-headed dogs, and a certain dog named Mohorangi could turn humans into stone just by looking them in the eye. So closely related to humans were Māori dogs, that it was believed that after death they went to the same "heaven" as human beings, but along a different path.

Hawaiian mythology tells numerous stories of half-human and man-eating dogs. Kū-ʻilio-loa, half man, half dog, originally came from Tahiti, where he was known for his ferocious and terrorist ways. Once in Hawai'i, he had many similar adventures, but eventually he happened to meet Kamapua'a, the infamous pig-man of Hawaiian mythology. The two ended up in a vicious battle, and although Kū-ʻilio-loa was killed by Kamapua'a, his legends live on in many other stories. Another famous legend tells of Puapualenalena, who lived on the Big Island of Hawai'i. He was a thief and a trickster and was successful only because he could turn himself into a dog and go about the countryside stealing whatever he wanted. His most famous theft was a sacred conch shell called Kīhā-pū, which at that time was in the possession of a group of spirits living in the steep cliffs above Waipi'o Valley. Supposedly after the conch shell was stolen by Puapualenalena and returned to its owner, it was handed down through generations of the royal Kamehameha family, until it was finally deposited in the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu.

*See also* Hina; Kamapua'a; Māui

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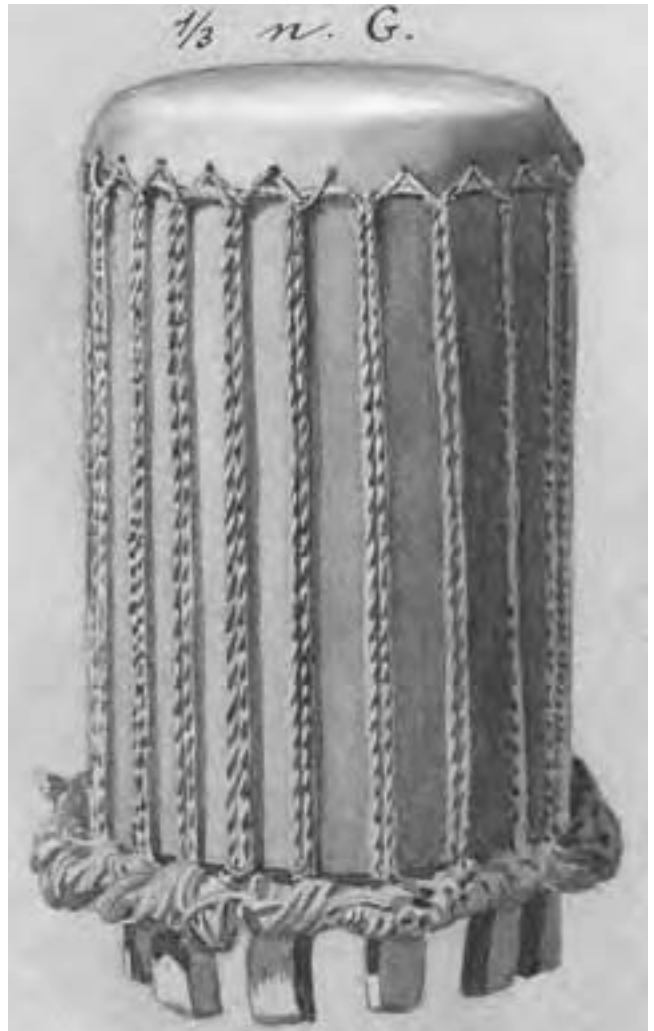
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## DRUMS

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Drums were used throughout all of ancient Polynesia, except New Zealand, and they were made in a variety of forms and used for many purposes. The most popular type of drum was cylindrical and hollowed out from a piece of polished wood. The bottom end, however, remained solid. A membrane of sharkskin would be stretched over the top and secured with sennit (twine) to various slots cut into the bottom portion of the drum. These drums were fashioned into different shapes and sizes, depending upon the tone and their intended purpose. Many were richly carved and were finished with exquisite wrappings of sennit. (See Illustrations 3.14 and 3.15.)

A bass drum would normally be 12 to 14 inches in diameter and about the same in height. A middle tone was produced from a drum about 2.5 feet high and about 10 inches in diameter, and the highest pitched drum would stand 3.5 feet high and be 7 to 8 inches in diameter. Sharkskin drums were usually beaten by using the hands or fingers, although in modern times they are sometimes beaten with two sticks.



*Illustration 3.14: Drawing of a simple Tahitian drum made of sharkskin stretched over a hollowed-out tree trunk. (Otto Bay/Bishop Museum)*

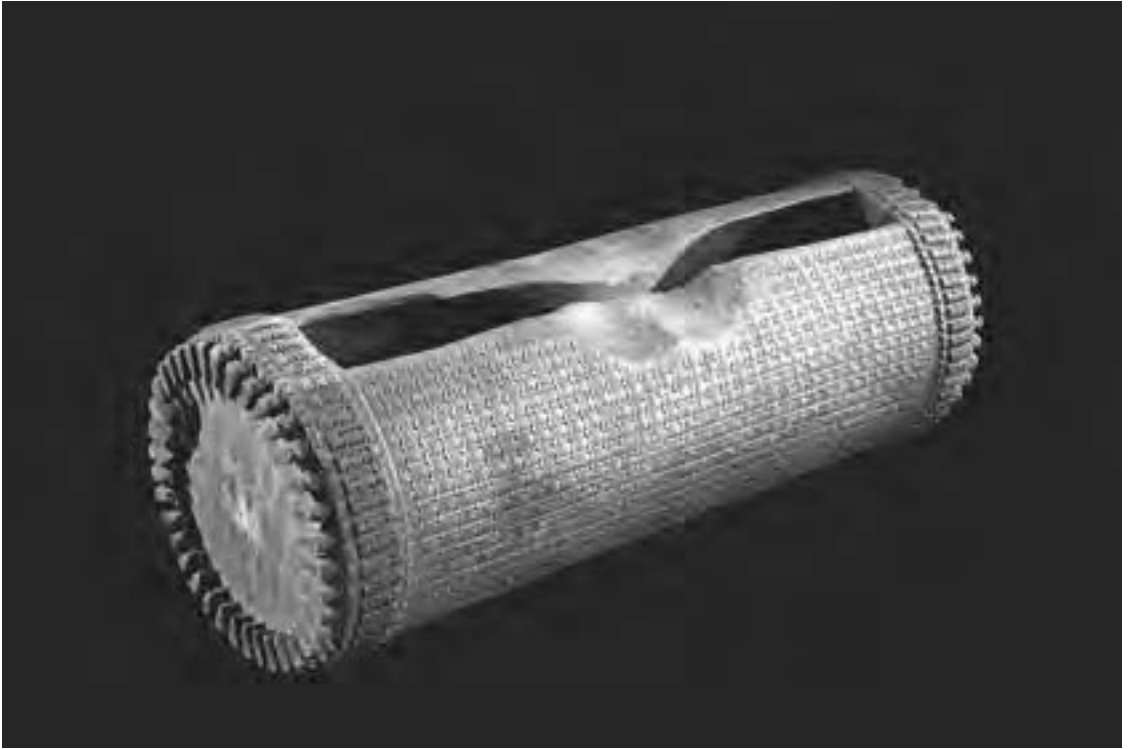


*Illustration 3.15: An intricately carved drum from the Austral Islands, slightly over 4 feet tall. (Cambridge Museum)*

Another type of drum was the slit gong or the slit drum (see Illustration 3.16). These drums were hollowed-out tree trunks or limbs of various lengths with an open slit in their lengths. They were beaten with one or two hard sticks to produce loud sounds; their tones, of course, depended upon their size and shape. Slit gongs or drums were not found in either Hawai'i or the Marquesas Islands.

Drums played a major role in Polynesian societies. They provided the background musical accompaniment for dancers and singers whenever they gathered for entertainment. They were used to encourage warriors on the battlefield and to communicate messages from one village to another. Priests used prayer drums in all of their religious ceremonies. They beat on them to signal to the villagers to gather for prayers or that an heir had been born to a high chief. Mournful beatings would signify that an important individual was sick or on his deathbed, or they would be used to chase away evil spirits. On the other hand, priests would drum in a loud





*Illustration 3.16: An example of a Cook Island slit gong, approximately 2 1/2 feet in length. (Harvard Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology)*

and animated fashion to catch the attention of their patron god and then use a prayer drum to provide accompaniment to their lengthy chants and prayers.

**See also** Ceremonies, Religious; Dance; Death; Priests; Storytelling and Chants; Temples

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## EARTHQUAKES

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Earthquakes are quite common in the high, volcanic islands of Polynesia, while many of the low islands and atolls hardly ever encounter them. Violent land shift-ings, which occurred from time to time in the past, could have caused unexpected



tsunamis or even whole islands to sink below the ocean. These catastrophic events were not easily forgotten, and the ancient Polynesians sought some explanation of their cause. Over the centuries, different stories emerged from one island group to the other, but most of them agree that earthquakes are caused by some underworld god or goddess.

In Sāmoa, for example, a one-armed god by the name of Mafui'e causes earthquakes. Stories say that once the demigod Māui traveled to the underworld to discover the secret of making fire for mortals. There, he confronted Mafui'e, the guardian of fire, and in their ferocious battle, Māui tore Mafui'e's arm off. He may have torn the other arm off as well, but one of Mafui'e's assigned jobs was to hold up the earth (the Samoan islands) with his mighty sticks. Not wanting to cause the islands to sink below the sea, Māui, therefore, ended his battle and returned home. Ever since then, Mafui'e sometimes shakes his stick and all the islands tremble. When such an earthquake occurs, the Samoans say, "Thank goodness for Mafui'e's one arm. What would the earthquake have been like if he had had two!"

Some Māoris in New Zealand say their earthquakes are caused by the god Rū turning over in his sleep in the underworld. More detailed legends, however, maintain that Rū was the youngest of all the gods, and that he had not yet been born when Sky Father (Rangi) and Earth Mother (Papa) were forcibly separated from one another. Rū, however, was in his mother's womb, and his brothers and sisters took pity upon him and endowed him with *ahi tipua* (sacred volcanic fires) to keep himself warm. Today, when Rū turns from one position to another in his mother's womb, his movements cause earthquakes in the world above. In the spring, he turns over completely and brings warmth to the earth, and in autumn, he turns again, withdraws his fire, and the earth becomes cold.

Although Hawaiians acknowledge Kāne-lulu-moku as their god of earthquakes, it is the goddess Pele who causes most of the earth-shattering destruction in Hawai'i with her belching fire and lava spewing out of the cracks in the sides of the mountains. Everywhere she goes, she is accompanied by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Less is known about Kāne-lulu-moku.

**See also** Māui; Meteorological Elements; Pele (Pere); Rū

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## ELVES AND FAIRIES

Cultural Group: New Zealand

Almost all ancient Polynesians believed in elves or fairies—those bands of small, mythical creatures who inhabit out-of-the-way places and who often startle human beings with their sudden appearance. There is actually a wide variety of different types of elves and fairies, and an exceptionally long list comes from the New Zealand Māoris. There, they are known by many different names, the principal ones being Turehu, Patupaiarehe, Korakorako, Tahurangi, and Heketoro—depending upon which tribe tells its story. Although there are some tales of these forest folk being diminutive in size, most of the Māori legends describe them as being of ordinary stature. They also all agree that they are fair skinned, wear white garments (although some go nude), sometimes have blue eyes, and are without tattoos. They live in caves found inland, high upon the sides of the mountains, and play musical instruments that can be heard floating down the hills. They usually are active at night, going about their work of building fish ponds, canoes, stone works, bridges, and other useful structures. They are very seldom seen alone. They prefer being in the company of others where they can safely converse, sing, and play the flute. When a human being happens to come upon a band of them, they vanish immediately, abandon that place, and establish their homes elsewhere.

They often appear in the legends of the demigods, where they have magical powers and where they often play tricks on the famous heroes. In the Rata legend, for example, the forest fairies hindered Rata from building his canoe by undoing all of the work he accomplished the previous day. Frustrated, Rata finally discovered their plot, captured their chief, and only released him when the elves promised to complete the construction of his canoe in one night's work. Sure enough, the next morning Rata found his magical canoe completed, and he set out on his sea adventure taking his new friends with him. The hero Māui was also accompanied by a band of small elves who aided him during his visit to Hine-nui-te-po in the underworld.

Names of other elves are found in Māori legends. The Pakepakeha and the Pakehakeha are creatures that are often seen floating down the river on driftwood, singing as they go. The Porotai are half human and half stone and have two faces, but, of course, Māori legends say they no longer are visible to human beings. The voices that sailors often hear singing out upon the open ocean are the voices of the Arawaru and the Irewaru, and the elves you might see dancing on the sands of the beach are known as Tutumaiao. They have grotesque forms, we are told, and disappear when you get close enough to them. Other coast-dwelling elves are called Tuturi-whekoi who appear in the form of a mist arising out of the ocean. It is unlucky to come upon them, but they do foretell calm

weather. Once, a mortal named Kahukura was walking upon the beach at night and came upon a band of Tutumaiao pulling in their fishnets. He began assisting them, but when the elves found out he was mortal, they disappeared but left their nets behind. Kahukura took their nets home and became the first human to discover the art of fishnet making.

The Maero sound more like goblins than elves. They appear as wild men having long yellow hair, tusk-type teeth, and immense fingers and nails, with which they capture their food (fish and birds) and eat it raw. They often capture mortal women and children and carry them off into the forest. The Nanakia elves are mischievous and strangely similar in character to the Maero. They live in trees in the deep, dark forests, do not know how to make fire, and thus eat their meat raw as well. One famous legend tells how a Māori wife was snatched from her husband by a Nanakia and taken to live with him in the forest. Eventually the husband found his abducted wife and connived with her to escape by attacking and slaying the Nanakia when he was sound asleep.

Many of the traditional legends of elves and fairies have been published; countless others, however, were never set in print. Almost daily, Polynesian parents tell their children fantastic stories they remember hearing from their own parents or relatives, or perhaps they even make them up spontaneously to serve as emergency bedtime stories or to frighten their children into doing what is right.

**See also** Ghosts; Māui; *Menehune*; Monsters; Rata or Laka

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## **FIRE**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Most Polynesians are familiar with the famous story of how humans first gained the knowledge of fire making from the goddess Mahuika (Mafui'e, Māhuike). It was a result of the young demigod Māui, who visited his grandmother in the underworld and who tricked her into revealing how to make fire. Of course, he barely survived the ordeal himself, but from that time forward, humans had the ability to create fire without the intervention of the goddess again.

But the ultimate origin of fire was not with Mahuika but with Rangi, Sky Father, who in the beginning of all creation carried a set of fire-generating sticks around his neck. With a stroke of these sticks, Rangi created the sun god, Rā, who married two sisters—the Summer Maiden and the Winter Maiden—and who eventually bore a son named Auahi-tu-roa, whose physical form was that of a

comet. As Rā crossed the sky every day, he looked down upon humans and saw that they lacked the warmth and conveniences of his fire, so he sent Auahi-tu-roa to earth with instructions on what he should do. Auahi-tu-roa descended to earth as a flaming comet, married Mahuika, sister to Hine-nui-te-po, the goddess of the underworld, and had five children who represented the five different forms of fire. Māori children can remember the names of the five children because they are the names of the five fingers on the hands—Takonui, Takoroa, Mapere, Manawa, and Toiti. The goddess Mahuika guarded her beloved children by keeping them in the fingernails of her hand. When she gave up her fingernails to Māui, of course, it meant the demise of each of her children. The last child, however, survived when Mahuika sent it into a nearby tree. From that day forward, humans have found that they can make fire themselves by rubbing two tree sticks together.

Because of its celestial origin, Polynesians considered fire to be sacred. For this reason, it was often worshiped as well as being an essential element in almost every religious ceremony. Priests would rub sticks together while offering up specific chants in order to produce a special, sacred fire for use in their temple rites. This fire would thus be endowed with the necessary mana so that the requisite *atua* (god) could enter in it and make his presence known. This ritual fire and its surrounding area would then become *tapu*, and it would take another priest and another ceremony to release its “forbidden” character. Some sites, it is said, remained *tapu* for generations because this cleansing ceremony had been forgotten.

Ritual fires such as these were kindled on numerous occasions. War was especially important. Sacred fires signaled the beginning of war, and priests often rekindled more fires to give their own warriors courage and bravery to push back the enemy. On other occasions, sacred fires were used to foretell the future, to aid a successful hunt, to mark the felling of a tree for the construction of a canoe, to offer up the first fruits to the gods, to mark a tattooing ceremony, to conjure up magical rites, and to destroy evil spirits or to wrong other humans who may have hurt them.

One remarkable fire ceremony found in a few Polynesian islands was that of fire walking—a participant strolling leisurely across a hot bed of coals barefoot. These rare occurrences were publicly performed to add prestige or to give certain heightened effects to important events. The ceremony usually took a week to prepare. The performers, usually priests, went into seclusion, where they were considered *tapu* and where they fasted and prepared their minds. On the day of the event, a bed of coals was prepared similar to a Polynesian underground oven (*imu*, *‘umu*), but on a much larger scale. Stacks of wood were gathered and placed in the bottom of a square pit (up to 18 feet wide), upon which were placed various sizes of stones. The wood was then lit and allowed to burn for at least 7 to

9 hours. When the fire had burned down, the extremely white, hot stones were arranged in a level manner. When the preparations were complete, the fire walkers made their entrance, wearing only a tapa loincloth and a wreath of ferns around their heads. They also carried a bundle of sacred tī leaves in each hand, which they used to beat out the flames of any remaining fire. As the crowd became silent, the priests offered up incantations to the gods, and then they began their slow stroll over the hot rocks. One followed the other without looking from side to side or to his back. They continued the slow process across the coals, sometimes repeating the process over and over again. When they finished, they walked straight forward out of the coals onto the cooler ground for several yards. Sometimes their hair and eyebrows would be singed from the heat, but amazingly their feet would suffer no blisters. On some occasions, a group of islanders (both men and women) would gather up enough courage and inspiration to walk behind the priests in a single file. Usually, they came through the ordeal unscathed as well. Modern fire walkers still perform this feat in various parts of the world, and scientists yet cannot explain the phenomenon of how they perform the feat without injury to their feet and legs.

*See also* Earthquakes; Māui; Pele (Pere); Underworld

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## **FISH, BATTLE OF THE**

Cultural Group: New Zealand

Long ago, before the fishes of the ocean had gained their distinguishing marks, Māori legends tell us that a violent war broke out between them and the human race. It all occurred because a certain Māori warrior deserted his wife and never returned home. Distraught, the wife sought high and low for him, but without success. She asked the trees of the forest, the house fire, his fishing lines, and the door to their house if anyone had seen him. They all replied they had not. As a last resort, the woman went to Tangaroa, the great god of the ocean and king of all the fish, and told him of her plight. Tangaroa took pity upon the weeping woman and called all of his fish to assemble for an important meeting.

Once assembled, Tangaroa told his followers of the woman's state of affairs, and after much discussion, it was decided that they should declare war upon the whole human race, their old enemy. The sea creatures formed in tanks and practiced for days going through their various battle maneuvers. Finally, Tangaroa called for an attack. The fish marched off in groups across the plain, for in those

days, it is said, fish could travel on land as well as the sea. Once they reached the *pa* (human fortification), each of the fish battalions fought bravely against the humans one after another, and many on both sides were slain. Finally, Tangaloa called in his contingent of huge whales, and with all of their force they were able to crush the wooden barriers of the formidable fort. The fish charged in, and the humans fled. The contest was over, and the sea creatures had won. Tangaroa called his fish followers together and awarded them with the spoils of war. Each group was granted whatever distinguishing physical characteristics it desired—the stingray got a barbed tail, the flounder a flat form, and another a spear-type nose—each in succession until they had all been awarded their victory prize. And, so the legend tells us, this is why there are so many types and colors of fish in the sea.

*See also* Birds; Dogs; Monsters; Ocean; Sharks; Tangaloa

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## GENEALOGIES

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Because of the importance of heredity to one's status in society, most ancient Polynesians displayed an absorbing interest in genealogy and the recitation of their personal pedigrees. The recitation of an important pedigree was essential to most Polynesian ceremonies. High chiefs ruled because they had the proper pedigree—they were descended from the senior line of a noble ancestor whose mana (power) passed down through successive generations from father to eldest son (primogeniture).

High chiefs took great pride in having their family pedigrees preserved and passed down from one generation to another. They often employed skilled genealogists, usually priests, to carry out this important chore. Some Polynesian pedigrees that have survived into the modern period (early 1800s) stretch back over a hundred generations. In 1842, for example, King Kamehameha of Hawai'i claimed a pedigree of 117 ancestors that stretched back through all human existence to the island's first creation. Pedigrees collected from other islands—the Marquesas and New Zealand—have helped anthropologists and historians pinpoint the approximate time that the first immigrants settled that particular island group. In New Zealand, it was also important that a chief be able to trace his ancestors back to one of the initial canoes that first sailed to the islands from Hawaiki.

It was also expected of a chief to remember the pedigrees of each of the families within his tribe, because, in a stratified society such as Polynesia, rank was

of the utmost importance. In a small island tribe, everyone knew his or her rank vis-à-vis every other person, even though it meant memorizing pedigrees of all uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, and cousins to the twentieth degree. Since Polynesians had no written language, genealogy keepers frequently had carved sticks, notched with certain marks, to help toggle their memory, because no mistakes could be made in the recitation of important lines of descent.

Just like the stratified societies in Polynesia, pedigrees were ranked from the greatest to the least worthy. Those pedigrees that extended back further were considered the more honorable; shallow pedigrees the least honorable. Seniority and the descent through the first-born son was the next-ranking category. To the Polynesians, the first-born (whether male or female) inherited the most mana from the father. As pedigrees became entangled over the centuries through intermarriage, it often happened that an individual in the tribe could possess a more lustrous pedigree than the actual ruler. Examples could also be given where a female claimed social status higher than that of a tribe's ruler and refused to obey his commands.

Interestingly, some lengthy pedigree charts in one island group find counterparts in other parts of Polynesia. The Puna genealogical line in Hawai'i, for example, is well known in Tahiti and the Cook Islands, while the Hema line is known as far away as New Zealand. These discoveries lead one to believe that these noble pedigrees were carefully kept throughout the centuries, but other lengthy pedigrees, on the other hand, look suspect. Some appear to have been altered by the adding of prominent heroes' names to enhance one's family, some appear to have added the pedigree of a slain enemy, and others are obscure names that cannot be verified. The genealogical priests were essentially the washbasins of the chiefs, and it was their duty to produce the most notable pedigree of all (Beckwith 1940, 10).

Pedigrees are still being kept by modern-day Polynesians. Many of the old families continue to preserve their family chants, songs, and historical records. Also, the Mormon Church (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), which plays a much larger role in Polynesia than in many other parts of the world, emphasizes pedigree record keeping among its members. The courts in Tonga retain the official records that verify the authenticity of certain pedigree charts there. A few modern social organizations require tracing one's pedigree back to a certain ancestor before being admitted to these groups, similar to the requirement by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) in the United States. And, of course, there are still the "blue bloods" in some islands who claim certain noble status based upon genealogical right. In many cases, they are given respect and recognition by family and friends who dream of the old Polynesian ways.



*See also* Arioi Society; Chiefly Class; Hawaiki; Mana; Migrations; Priests; *Tapu*

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## GHOSTS

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Ancient Polynesians believed that their society consisted of the world of humans and the world of spirits and that the two simply resided in different “rooms.” The spirit world (sometimes referred to as the underworld or the *pō*) included their deities, demigods, and the souls of deceased persons, more often referred to as “ghosts.” Polynesian myths suggest that humans have both a body and a soul (or spirit) and that upon death, the soul departs the body and makes its journey either to paradise or to a type of limbo. Some say the soul leaves the body through the cranium, while others say through the mouth when the last breath is taken. As long as there is any flesh left upon the deceased’s bones, there remains a link between the body and the soul. In some instances, the soul hovers around the body for some time before beginning its journey to the underworld. For these reasons, Polynesians afforded their deceased kin a timely and secret burial so that the body would remain out of reach of their enemies, who might do it harm.

For one reason or another, the souls of some departed spirits never reach the underworld but return to the realm of the living as ghosts. These ghosts can be divided into three major categories. First, the good ghosts who return to watch over the welfare of their living kin. In these instances, the ghost enters into its former skull, where it resides and where its kin often preserves and assigns it to a sacred place within their homes. Then, there are the rambling ghosts who take only an occasional interest in the affairs of their surviving relatives. Third, there are the fierce, malevolent ghosts who bring destruction upon anyone who crosses their path—relatives or not. These ghosts can physically injure or kill humans by causing accidents or they can guide an enemy’s lethal weapon to a vulnerable spot upon the body. They can also enter human bodies and cause major damage to their internal organs. More seriously, these ghosts can seize and destroy the spirit of a human being by kidnapping it directly from the body or while the soul is wandering out of the body during sleep. These malevolent ghosts more often



appear in Polynesian myths than any other, primarily because they cause fear and trembling in the hearts of the listeners, and they make for a good story.

Spirits or ghosts can communicate to the living by various means—through omens, auguries, and dreams. For example, if a man or woman continually meets with failure after failure, it can only mean that a malevolent spirit is the cause. Likewise, if persons meet with continued success, it means that a family spirit is watching out for them. More immediate communication between the living and dead comes through physical signs or omens. A sudden rustling of the leaves on a tree can have a certain meaning. The appearance of a sacred bird along one's path can mean something else, and a falling star or comet certainly foretells certain calamities or blessings in one's future. Spirits or ghosts can appear in a dream to give a warning or to threaten some impending danger. In these last cases, the dreamer will certainly visit a priest or seer to have the true meaning of these signs revealed.

All Polynesian societies have an endless array of ghost stories or of spirits who play significant roles in their traditional legends. Unfortunately, very few of these stories have actually been collected together and published in a single volume. An exception is in Hawai'i, where historian William D. Westervelt (1849–1939) collected and published a small booklet entitled *Hawaiian Legends of Ghosts and Ghost-Gods* in 1915. This ever-popular work has been reprinted numerous times, the last being in 1998. The 262-page booklet includes more than eighteen full-length Hawaiian tales that Westervelt collected and translated into English.

One story in particular, the "Hawaiian Ghost Testing," includes many of the generalizations made previously regarding ghosts and their unique characteristics. The story tells the legend of the beautiful rainbow maiden Kahala(opuna), or sometimes called 'Ānuenue, who lived in Mānoa Valley, located just up the mountainside from Waikīkī on the island of O'ahu. Two neighboring chiefs sought her hand in marriage—the wicked Ka'uhi from Waikīkī and the virtuous Mahana from Kamō'ili'ili. Scorned by Kahala, Ka'uhi angrily killed and buried the young maiden. Fortunately, her guardian owl god dug her up and brought her back to life. This occurred several times until Ka'uhi decided to bury her under a large *koa* tree, whose strong roots would prevent the owl from exhuming her. Again, Kahala's spirit lingered around the vicinity in hopes of being resurrected once more. But unfortunately, her guardian owl could not help. Time was of the essence, and Kahala's spirit grew ever more anxious as it grew ever more distant from her body. Finally, the handsome Mahana wandered by, felt the eerie presence of a wandering spirit, and spied the newly dug grave. He dug down through the roots of the tree, uncovered the body of the beautiful maiden, and hurriedly carried it back home, where he sought the help of his brother, a

*kahuna* (priest), in restoring her to life. The *kahuna* prayed and prayed, but nothing happened. Finally, he appealed to Kahala's two guardian sister spirits to help bring her back to life. The sisters obeyed. They grabbed Kahala's spirit and "forced" it back into her body through her feet (the usual way in which a spirit reentered its body). It took several days, however, before Kahala fully recovered.

Meanwhile, Mahana sought revenge against Ka'uhi and proposed personal combat. Ka'uhi finally admitted that that he had slain Kahala, but Mahana retorted that she was alive and living with his sisters, who actually were Kahala's two guardian spirits. Ka'uhi believed Mahana was lying and that he was actually harboring an imposter or a ghost. He proposed that if Mahana's "imposter" passed certain tests that proved him wrong, Ka'uhi would willingly be slain and baked in an *imu* (underground oven). The test, of course, would determine whether or not the imposter was a ghost or whether it was human. The test was simple. The imposter and the sisters had to walk across a bed of dried 'ape (taro) leaves. If the imposter was human, the leaves would be crushed. If it was a ghost, the leaves would remain whole, and Milu, the god of the underworld, would be there to snatch the spirit and take it back with him. To Ka'uhi, his plan sounded like a win-win situation, for he believed that Kahala was indeed still dead.

To Kahala and her guardian spirits, however, it was a real ordeal. The sister spirits warned Kahala that she had to walk across the leaves and crush as many of them on both sides of her as she could, otherwise, the two sisters would be detected by Milu and snatched away to the underworld. The day of the event arrived, and Kahala and her two guardian spirits walked through the crowd and across the leaves. Kahala crushed as many leaves as she could, but one of the spectators, a powerful sorcerer, somehow detected the presence of certain spirits. He demanded that another test be passed. This time it was the gourd test. Everyone knew that only spirits made a certain type of reflection in water contained in gourds. When the gourd full of water arrived, the sorcerer could hardly contain himself. He forced his spirit to leave his body so that he could see the test close up. Since his spirit face was immediately reflected in the gourd, the testing priest grabbed the reflection and crushed it to death. Naturally, the sorcerer died on the spot. The test was then halted, and the two sister spirits were spared. Ka'uhi was punished for his crimes and put to death. Mahana received his lands, and he and Kahala lived happily ever after.

**See also** Death; Elves and Fairies; *Menehune*; Monsters; Underworld

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**GIANTS**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Almost every culture of the world has its mythological tales of giants. These enormous creatures usually lived in the far-distant past and were enemies of both humans and gods. They were often portrayed as being tall and human in appearance, like the giant in the nursery tale "Jack and the Beanstalk," but on other occasions, they were portrayed as fearful monsters or ogres, sometimes with several heads and a multitude of eyes. Polynesian stories, also, have their own collection of such gargantuan creatures.

In Sāmoa there is a story of an ancient war between the Sā-Tangaloa (gods in the heavens) and a band of giants who lived on the earth. Once the Sā-Tangaloa wanted to have some fish to eat, so they sent messengers down to earth to instruct their earthy servant, the giant Losi, to fetch some up to heaven for them. Obeying the gods' wishes, Losi went fishing, caught a lot of fish (probably bonito, for they were the favorite of the gods), and carried them up to heaven. Once there, Losi decided to play a practical joke on the gods. He placed a fish on the threshold of each of the huts where the gods were sleeping. The next morning as the gods stepped outside, they slipped on the fish and fell flat on their backs. Losi roared with laughter, but of course, the gods were humiliated and angry, but they took no reprisals against him.

Meanwhile, the gods prepared a large underground oven to cook their taro for themselves and for their guest, Losi. Not having this heavenly food on earth, Losi decided to steal a start of the taro, hide it in his loincloth, and bring it back to earth with him. Suspecting Losi's theft, the gods searched him thoroughly before he left heaven, but they found nothing. Losi, however, was insulted because of the strip search, and when he reached earth, he called upon his fellow giants for a war of revenge. He gathered a group together and set off for heaven once again. This time, the Sā-Tangaloa knew what they were up to and devised their own strategic plan of defense.

First, the gods invited the earthlings to a dinner, where they planned to attack and kill them while they were eating. The giants, however, suspected the plan and prepared their own meal, thus thwarting the efforts of the gods. The next day a club battle between one of the most courageous gods and the giant Moso ended in the god's humiliating defeat. After several similar unsuccessful events to rid themselves of the giants, the gods decided to try a pitched battle. The giant Le-Fanonga, however, took on all of his competitors and killed everyone. Taking advantage of their newfound success, the giants gathered all the heavenly trees and food plants they could and brought them down to earth with them, and this is the reason humans have these delicious foods—taro, breadfruit, coconut, and kava—that once provided nourishment only for the gods.

Several stories from the island of Rotuma (a Polynesian island, geographically located today in the island nation of Fiji) tell of how several giants were outwitted and killed by humans. One story is about a woman named Kirkirsasa, whose armpits were completely covered in tattoos. One day she sent her two maidservants to the seashore to get some seawater for cooking. When they reached the beach, they casually strolled along, sightseeing rather than doing what they had been told. Soon, they came upon a sleeping giant lying on a bluff above the beach, and they decided to tease him by pelting him with stones. Immediately, the giant arose and ran after the frightened girls. Exhausted, they made their way back home, where Kirkirsasa chastised them for what they had done and told them to sit down and that she would take care of the giant. The giant, too, was exhausted when he arrived at Kirkirsasa's house, and Kirkirsasa invited him to sit down and relax for a while. The giant insisted, however, that once he had rested, he intended to eat the two adversaries who had awakened him. Kirkirsasa suggested that she entertain him, and then after that he could go about his business. He agreed. Kirkirsasa began dancing this way and that, while all the time raising her arms to show off her beautiful tattoos. The giant was amused at her gyrations and inquired regarding her tattoos. He proposed that if she could get his armpits tattooed like hers, then he would forget about his revenge against her servants. Kirkirsasa agreed, but in the back of her mind, she had other plans.

She gathered her helpers around and built an enormous fire to heat the large stones, which she told the giant were needed for the tattoos. She also instructed him to lie down between two posts so they could tie down his arms in order that he would endure the tattooing process. After his limbs were securely tied, Kirkirsasa and her helpers took the large stones, burned his armpits, eyes, nose, and the rest of his body so much that the giant died on the spot. Kirkirsasa then scolded her servants severely and warned them never to do such a thing ever again.

Stories of Polynesian giants are told elsewhere in Polynesia as well. The giants in the Tuamotus are called *hivas*, and the islanders tell about Patira, a *hiva*, who kidnapped the beautiful wife of Moeava, the greatest warrior in all the Tuamotus. Seeking revenge, Moeava put on his magical *malo* (loincloth) and with his large sling killed the mighty giant, reminiscent of the David and Goliath story in Hebrew mythology. A war followed as Patira's relatives killed several of Moeava's children. Moeava, however, won the day. He eventually slaughtered the giant's family and, as a result, gained political control over the islands. Once, they say, two *hivas* landed on Marokau Island seeking to live there. Two Tuamotuan warriors, Te Huo and Mati, were finally able to slay them, but only after a huge hole had been formed in the ground from the battle. A similar story

is told of three *hivas* who landed on Hao Island and took refuge in the *marae* (temple). The Tuamotuans finally were able to get rid of them by secretly feeding them dog meat, a food *kapu* (forbidden) to the giants. When they found out about the deception, the giants were furious and went into a rage. They tore up the reef, broke down coconut trees, and threatened the lives of the islanders. It is said that another *hiva*, Hitiraumea, had gills under his ears that he could use while swimming!

Māori legends also tell of their giants. South Island was once supposed to have been inhabited by a giant race of people called Kāhu-tupua, and they could step from one mountain peak to another, swallow whole rivers down in a single gulp, and transform themselves into any form they wished. One of these, they say, was 42 feet (7 fathoms) tall, and he warred with another giant who was 48 feet tall. A Mangaian giant (Moke), it was claimed, was 60 feet tall, and his footprints in the rocks measure 2 feet, 8 inches in length.

**See also** Cannibalism and Human Sacrifices; Elves and Fairies; *Menehune*; Monsters; Stretching Gods

**Suggested Reading:**

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## GOD IMAGES

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

There seems to be a natural inclination among humans to fashion images of gods and goddesses from earthly materials. Most cultures have left some physical form of them—ranging from the small fertility goddesses made out of clay by the early Sumerians to the highly carved statues later left by the artists in Egypt and India. Polynesians were no exception. Some Polynesians, however, did not give much importance to god images—Tongans and Samoans, for example—and, as a result, fewer images from these islands have survived. Despite the fact that early nineteenth-century Christian missionaries destroyed as many of these as they could, some managed to endure. They later made their way into public museums and private collections, where they have been preserved. As a group, the god images from Polynesia may be categorized by their medium—whether they were made from stone, wood, or wicker and feathers.



*Illustration 3.17: An ancient Hawaiian fish god as represented by this stone locted near Mā'ili Point on the island of O'ahu, Hawai'i. Notice the current offerings and "sacrifices" by passing fishermen. (Photo by Jane Gutmanis, the Pacific Institute, Hawai'i)*

Most likely the oldest of the Polynesian gods were simple upright stones, unworked by human hands, or perhaps they were slightly incised to give them a more supernatural quality. The Hawaiian stone god in Illustration 3.17 represents an ancient fishing god found along the Waianae coast near Mā'ili Point on the island of O'ahu. As you can see from the current offerings of fish, sennit, and gourd, this god image is still being revered by the local fishermen. Likewise in New Zealand, there exists a group of four stones that the Māoris consider images of their ancient gods Maru-te-whare-aitu, Rongomai, Ihungaru, and Itupawa.





*Illustration 3.18: A stone statue from Taipivai Valley, Nuku Hiva, Marquesas Islands. (James L. Amos/CORBIS)*

These stones are located at an ancient site called Puhirua near Rotorua.

Larger and more impressive carved stone images, however, are located further east in the South Pacific—in the Marquesas Islands, Raivavae (Austral Islands), and Easter Island. Here, the stone gods are seen at their best and are ranked in quality and size from those in the Marquesas to Raivavae and Easter Island. Impressive stone god images up to 8 feet (2.5 meters) high are found in Taipivai Valley on Nuku Hiva (Marquesas). The ancient craftsmen who carved these statues also built huge stone platforms on which their community buildings, their temples, and their god images stood. The physical characteristics of these Marquesan images are very similar. They are squat with bent knees, goggle-eyed, flaring nostrils, thick lips, and hands placed on their tummies (see Illustrations 3.18 and 3.19). Carbon dating places their construction around A.D. 1500. Similar examples of impressive stone images can be found on the island of Raivavae, some of which stand taller than those in the Marquesas.

The most impressive of all the stone images in Polynesia, of course, are the six hundred *moai* found on Easter Island (see Illustrations 3.31, 3.32, and 3.33 in the “Moai, Easter Island” entry). Wood was scarce on Easter Island, and as a result, the islanders turned to the plentiful supply of rock they found around them. From it, they formed these colossal images, which represent their ancestors or perhaps their gods. No one can determine for sure. Similar to the statues in the Marquesas and on

Raivavae, the Easter Island *moai* are stereotypical, and their overall style changes only slightly from one to another. This slight difference is probably due to the different carving technique used by the various artists.

Similar to god images made of stone, wooden ones also range from the simple to the complex. Wooden images are popularly called *tikis* in English (*ki'i* in Hawaiian, *ti'i* in Tahitian, and *tiki* in New Zealand Māori). Ancient images of the great Tahitian god 'Oro, for example, were simple wooden club-looking objects, ranging from one to three feet in length, and wrapped carefully with coconut fiber rope (*sennit*). The *to'o* (wrapped object) was then decorated with various red and yellow feathers. 'Oro's image was brought out when needed during religious ceremonies and then stored in special temple houses built on the sacred *marae*. Sometimes, the artist would give the club-shaped image more anthropomorphic characteristics by interweaving additional layers of sennit

to form facial features such as the eyes, nose, mouth, and ears (see Illustration 3.20). Images such as these were not actually considered gods, but vessels or receptacles for the gods in which they could enter during religious ceremonies. Hawaiian legends tell us that image worship there was introduced only in the twelfth century, many centuries after the first settlement of the islands. The story alleges that La'a-mai-kahiki, a priest from Kahiki (Tahiti?), sailed to Hawai'i by invitation of the great Hawaiian explorer Moikeha and brought with him various musical instruments (drums), the hula, and, of course, the practice of image worship.



*Illustration 3.19: A stone god image (tiki) found at Mi'Ae Oipona, Hiva Oa Island, in the Marquesas Islands. (Wolfgang Kaehler/CORBIS)*





*Illustration 3.20: Representation of the Tahitian god 'Oro, made from a wooden club wrapped with sennit (cording) and further decorated to form facial features. (Cambridge Museum)*

In New Zealand, simple post carvings of the gods are among the oldest. One dating from A.D. 1200–1500 depicts Uenuku, the war god of the Waikato tribe. When the Waikato went to war, their priests would invoke Uenuku to inhabit a smaller image of the god, and then they would carry it into battle as their guardian. Very few wooden god images, however, have survived in New Zealand, primarily because most of their god images were simple and less important than the highly decorated ancestral images they carved in their tribal meeting houses. Another interesting post carving, now housed in the Otago Museum in Wellington, shows the mythological pair Rangī (Sky Father) and Papa (Earth Mother). Here we see a highly incised sculpture of the two deities in a sexual embrace (see Illustration 3.38). The exquisite wall figures in bas-relief carved in most of the Māori meeting houses, however, are generally of images of Māori ancestors rather than of their gods. Māoris also carved portable stick gods, which they could easily carry from one place to another (see Illustration 3.21). They were generally 12 to 15 inches in length with carvings on one end and a sharpened peg on the other. The *tohunga* (priest) could either hold the god in his hands or plant it into the ground.

More elaborately formed wooden statues, however, come from the other Central Polynesian islands of Rarotonga (Cook Islands), Rurutu (Austral Islands), Easter Island, and Hawai'i. Here the statues are freestanding and three-dimensional, and some reach large proportions. Illustrations 3.22 through 3.24 represent the finest wood carvings of gods found in all of Polynesia.



*Illustration 3.21: A Māori stick god (taumata atua), made of manuka (tea-tree) wood and found in 1973 on the shores of Akaroa Harbor, Bank's Peninsula, New Zealand. It is the largest (2 feet) and oldest yet to be found. (Werner Forman/CORBIS)*



*Illustration 3.22: A god image from Rarotonga, Cook Islands, dating back to at least 1834 when it was discovered by a missionary from the London Missionary Society. It stands 22 1/2 inches high and is made of wood. (George Ortiz, In Pursuit of the Absolute, Art of the Ancient World, cat. no. 274, rev. ed. Bern: The George Ortiz Collection, 1996; [www.georgeortiz.com](http://www.georgeortiz.com))*



*Illustration 3.23: A fisherman's wooden canoe god from Rarotonga, Cook Islands, stands 16 3/4 inches high with painted patterns resembling tattoos. (Harvard Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology)*



*Illustration 3.24: Figure of the creator god Tangaroa from Rurutu in the Austral Islands. It stands 45-1/2 inches high and shows him producing other beings from his body. Its hollow body was probably used to house other religious articles. (Werner Forman/CORBIS)*

Two of them, Illustrations 3.22 and 3.23, represent fishing gods from Rarotonga and are relatively similar in style. They were carved from hardwood (perhaps ironwood), and their combined features exert a powerful impression upon the observer. Notice also their uniquely hand-painted tattoo marks. These Rarotongan images were carved in such a way that they could easily be attached to the prow end of a Polynesian canoe. Another unique wooden god image, shown in Illustration 3.24, comes from Rurutu, and again, it perhaps represents only one type of many that did not survive destruction by the Christian missionaries. In 1821, this particular statue was taken by the missionaries from Rurutu to Rā'iatea (Society Islands), where it was added to the samples of "gods" being sent back to their headquarters in London. The wooden sculpture is said to represent A'a, the supreme god of Rurutu. Some identify it also as the creator god Tangaroa (Ta'aroa), and the small figures attached to it symbolize his creations. The statue is

hollow and open in back, where various religious implements were stored when the image was not being used.

Although Easter Island is noted primarily for its stone statues, there are several wooden ones from there that warrant our interest. Illustration 3.25 shows a wooden image of Makemake, the supreme god worshiped on Easter Island and another that appears with a human body and a bird head, thus called "the bird-man." His image appears everywhere on rock carvings (petroglyphs) around the island. Another fine wood carving from Easter Island is that of a male ancestral spirit. Although not used for worship, this exquisite statue pos-

sessed certain spiritual powers that could influence the outcome of certain events among his descendants.

The finest of all Polynesian wood god images come from Hawai'i. When Captain Cook first visited the islands (in 1778 and 1779), he and his crew were impressed with the majestic wooden gods they found there. Cook and subsequent explorers to the islands gathered samples of the images and sent them back to their national museums throughout Europe. Those that survived in Hawai'i eventually made their way into private collections and into the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu. The "Warfare and War Gods—Kū, 'Oro, Nafanua" entry later in this chapter includes two photos (Illustrations 3.48 and 3.49) that show different versions of the same god—Kū-kā'ili-moku, the Hawaiian war god and a personal favorite of King Kamehameha I, who died in 1819. After his death, according to tradition, the original Kū god image was placed into a canoe by its keeper and sent back to Kahiki (Tahiti?), from whence it had come. It was never seen again.



*Illustration 3.25: A wood carving of the god Makemake (moai kavakava) from Easter Island. (Christie's Images/CORBIS)*



*Illustration 3.26: A feathered god image, 40 1/2 inches high, from Hawai'i, collected by Captain Cook on his third voyage around the world (1778–1779). (F.003699/06, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa)*

Another unique form of a god image is the wicker-based, feather-covered images from Hawai'i (see Illustration 3.26). Nowhere else in Polynesia is this particular sophisticated art form found. The Hawaiians were skilled craftsmen in woven feather work, as attested also by the magnificent feather cloaks they created for their chiefly class. The wicker god images were constructed of woven mountain vines over which a finely woven netting was secured. Sacred feathers (usually yellow, red, and black) were hand-sewn onto the netting and overlapped so that the quill ends could not be seen. Mother-of-pearl shells formed the image's eyes, and dogs' teeth made up its mouth. The whole impression is one that would strike awe and fear into its worshipers.

**See also** Temples; Warfare and War Gods—Kū, 'Oro, Nafanua

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Kaeppler, Adrienne L. "Artificial Curiosities," *An Exposition of Native Manufactures Collected on the Three Pacific Voyages of Captain James Cook, R. N.* Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1978.

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*Illustration 3.27: Ha'amonga-a-Māui ("The Burden of Māui"), a monumental stone structure in Tonga, said to have been built about A.D. 1200 by Tonga's eleventh king. (Photo courtesy of Bernard Cloutier from his Web site, "The Globetrotter's Trail," at <http://berclo.net>)*

## HA'AMONGA-A-MĀUI

Cultural Group: Tonga

Several Polynesian islands are noted for their ancient monumental stonework. The most famous, of course, is Easter Island with its six hundred *moai* statues and platforms; equally important, however, are the massive stone walls and squat statues found in the Marquesas, the outdoor temples found in Hawai'i and the Society Islands (Tahiti), and the trilathon monument found in Tonga, called the Ha'amonga-a-Māui ("The Burden of Māui") (see Illustration 3.27).

Nicknamed the "Stonehenge of the Pacific," this massive, hand-carved coral structure stands at the northeastern tip of the island of Tongatapu, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from the modern capital of Nuku'alofa. Two enormous coral slabs, each weighing approximately 35 tons, stand upright between 14 to 16 feet and are approximately 10 to 12 feet apart, 8 to 10 feet wide, and 4 feet thick. When erected, deep notches were carved in the tops of the slabs to hold a third stone (the lintel), which itself weighs approximately 10 tons and is 24 feet long, 4 to 5 feet wide, and 2 feet thick. Like other massive monuments in Polynesia, the building of this structure is amazing when you consider that the Tongans had no

iron tools to cut the slabs, no wheels on which to transport the stones from the beach area, and no pulleys to hoist up the lintel to the top of the two other slabs. For these reasons, popular mythology maintains that it was the demigod Māui who created the trilathon since no human could possibly have made such a colossal structure. Others suggest that the two upright slabs represent Māui's arms supporting the third gigantic stone and thus the nickname "The Burden of Māui."

Scholars tell us, however, that the structure was built about A.D. 1200 by the eleventh Tu'i Tonga (king of Tonga) in honor of his two sons, represented by the two upright supports, and the strong bond between them, represented by the lintel. Some say that it later became the entrance to the royal compound that once stood at its back. In 1967, Tonga's current king, Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV, conducted scientific experiments and concluded that the structure was used as an astronomical observatory to determine the beginning of the summer solstice and thus a new year. In 1972, he declared the monument and the surrounding area a protected national park.

*See also* Māui; *Moai*, Easter Island; Temples

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Bellwood, Peter. *Man's Conquest of the Pacific*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 312.

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## HAUMEA

Cultural Group: Primarily Hawai'i

Haumea is a mysterious Hawaiian fertility goddess who takes various forms and identities. Being a sister to the gods Kāne and Kanaloa, she is ranked among the highest of Hawaiian deities, and she is one of the oldest worshiped in the islands. She is sometimes linked as a wife to the god Kanaloa, with whom she has several children, most prominent being the war god Kekaua-kahi, the volcano goddess Pele, and her brothers and sisters, including the beautiful Hi'iaka. Other stories maintain that Haumea is actually Papa, goddess of the sacred earth and wife to Wākea (vast space), and the two are the progenitors of all creation, including humans.

Haumea possesses a magical stick called the Makalei that attracts fish and helps in the production of food. It also empowers her to change from an old wrinkled woman into a beautiful young girl. Having this power, an aged Haumea returns to her homeland time and time again, changes herself into a young girl, and returns to marry one of her children or grandchildren in order to perpetuate the human race. After numerous generations, her identity is eventually discovered, and in anger she ceases living with her human creations.

As the goddess of fertility, Haumea is also recognized as the patroness of childbirth. It is said that Muleiula, the daughter of a famous Hawaiian chief, once was in childbirth. Her painful cries were heard by Haumea, who appeared before her. Haumea discovered that mortals gave birth only by cutting open the mother and delivering the child, similar to a Caesarean section. Haumea made a pain potion from flowers of the Kani-ka-wī tree (*Spondias dulcis*), gave it to Muleiula to drink, and then helped push the baby out the normal way. Ever since, humans have given birth the natural way.

*See also* Pele (Pere); Rangi and Papa; Wākea

**Suggested Reading:**

Beckwith, Martha. *Hawaiian Mythology*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940, pp. 276–290.

Westervelt, William D. *Hawaiian Legends of Old Honolulu*. Boston: G. H. Ellis, 1915, pp. 47–51.

## HAWAI'I-LOA

Cultural Group: Hawai'i

Traditional Hawaiian legends say that Hawai'i-loa was a famous Polynesian explorer who sailed the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean and who was the first to discover and settle the Hawaiian Islands, possibly in the eleventh or twelfth century. One account alleges that he was born in a distant land called Ka-'āina-kai-melemele-a-kāne (Land in the Yellow Sea of Kāne), but another account specifically says Kahiki-honua-kele (Kahiki a land reached by sailing), an island widely believed to be Tahiti, lying 2,730 miles (4,393 kilometers) to the south of Hawai'i. Hawai'i-loa and his three brothers—Kī, Kanaloa, and Lu'u-Kapu—were sons of Aniani-ka-lani, and from an early age they had become expert sailors and fishermen. Their long fishing voyages (sometimes lasting a year) took them to far-distant lands throughout the Pacific. Legends also suggest that Kī was the first to settle the Tahitian islands and his brother Kanaloa was the first to settle the Marquesas Islands.

Once during a long sea voyage, Hawai'i-loa's navigator Makali'i suggested that they follow the route of certain stars, for he believed that land lay to the east. Sure enough, after several days' voyage, they arrived at a beautiful, verdant island, and Hawai'i-loa named it after himself—Hawai'i. After staying for a while and replenishing their food supplies, Hawai'i-loa returned with his crew to Tahiti with the intention of returning with his family and making Hawai'i his home. Arriving in Tahiti, it took some time before plans could be completed for the return to Hawai'i. Most likely, his double-hulled canoe had to be repaired, food had to be collected, and proper good-byes said to family and relatives.

The group finally set out for its new home in Hawai'i. Accompanying Hawai'i-loa were his wife and young children, and eight skilled, but single sailors. They finally reached the Hawaiian Islands again, and as they sailed among them, Hawai'i-loa named each of the major islands after his own children—Māui after his first-born son, O'ahu after his daughter, and Kaua'i after his youngest son. They came ashore and settled on the island of Hawai'i. After living there for some time, Hawai'i-loa realized that his children had no mates, so he planned a return visit again to visit his brother Kī in Tahiti and to obtain spouses for them.

While visiting in Tahiti, apparently Hawai'i-loa agreed to set out with his brother on another voyage of discovery and settlement before returning to Hawai'i. They sailed westward to the island of Sawai'i (Savai'i in Sāmoa?) and left a couple there to settle the island. The couple consisted of Hawai'i-loa's granddaughter Keaka-i-Lalo and Kī's grandson Te Ari'i Aria. Legends say this couple became the ancestors of all the people in that island chain. Having completed his visit, Hawai'i-loa returned to Hawai'i with the intended spouses for his children. For his favorite daughter O'ahu, Hawai'i-loa arranged a marriage to his brother's first-born son, Tu-Nui-Ai-a-te-Atua. The descendants of this marriage, of course, became the highest-ranking chiefs in all of Hawai'i. On the other hand, commoners in Hawai'i claim descent from Hawai'i-loa's chief navigator, Makali'i.

Hawai'i-loa must have lived a long life, for we hear of numerous other voyages that he took to Tahiti to seek spouses for his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. For several generations thereafter, voyages between the two island chains were apparently frequent. In the fifth generation from Hawai'i-loa, for example, one of his great-granddaughters, Papa, supposedly traveled eight times between Tahiti and Hawai'i and finally died in Tahiti at a place called Waieri. She gave birth to children both in Hawai'i and Tahiti of different high-ranking chiefs, and thus she became the progenitor of all the high-ranking families on both islands. After that, voyages between the islands must have ceased, for we hear of no more until modern times.

**See also** Hawaiiki; Kupe and Turi; Migrations; Pleiades (Matariki); Rū

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## HAWAIIKI

Cultural Group: Eastern Polynesia.

The word Hawaiiki (Havahiki, Havaiki, Hawai'i, etc.) in traditional Polynesian chants refers to a geographical location. It usually means the land from which the ancient Polynesians migrated just before they arrived in their new land, but exact details regarding this homeland are vague and confusing because in some cases the Polynesians named one of their newly discovered islands after this revered homeland. For example, the Hawaiians have their Hawai'i, the Marquesans their Havaiki, Rarotongans their Avaiki, the Samoans their Savai'i, the Tongans their Habai, and the islands of Rā'iatea and Fakarava in French Polynesia were both called Havaiki. As a result, the listener to these chants frequently does not know whether the reference is to the present island or the one in their distant past. When the Polynesians were first visited by Western explorers and Christian missionaries, they were asked where they came from. The Polynesians, of course, normally gave the reply "from Hawaiiki." You can imagine the frustration and confusion this caused the new visitors who then tried to pinpoint the exact origin of these islanders.

There is also confusion in the legends themselves. In New Zealand, for example, legends tell us that the demigod Māui lived in Hawaiiki and that he "fished up" the islands of the Pacific—in this case, New Zealand—but the legends go on to maintain that these islands were the first ones created, the ones from which the Māoris left to migrate to New Zealand. Confusing, but apparently not enough to cause any major concern among the Māori listener.

More often, the word is meant to represent a mystical, faraway place, a place unknown to mortals' understanding, and a place where the demigods and heroes carry out their superhuman and supernatural exploits. For example, the demigod Māui lives in the primordial world of Hawaiiki, and the great navigator Rata moves back and forth between Havaiki and the kingdom of Puna. Frequently, Hawaiiki is the name of the underworld itself, the place where human spirits go after death. When the famous hero Tahaki dies, for example, the god Tāne enthrones him as the supreme god of Havaiki-nui, the underworld.

**See also** Māui; Rata or Laka; Tahaki; Underworld

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Tregear, Edward. *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*. Wellington, NZ: Government Printer, 1891.

**HINA**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia (with various spellings)

No matter how it is spelled—Hina, Hine, Ina, or Sina—she is the goddess most recognized throughout all of Polynesia, and many Polynesian goddesses have names beginning with Hina—Hina-tu-moana (Tahiti), Hina-uri (New Zealand), Hina-Tuafuaga (Tonga), Hina-i-ka-malama (Hawai'i), Hina-Hele (Tahiti), Ina-anivai (Mangaia), Hina-Oio (Easter Island), Sina-so'umani (Sāmoa), and on and on. Hundreds of unique stories are told of this goddess, and many of them contain several common themes.

The most common is that Hina is a goddess who resides in the moon, who is the patroness of tapa (cloth) beaters, and who is the protector of travelers at night. Various reasons are given for Hina's decision to leave earth and travel to the moon. In Hawai'i, she was fed up with the way she was treated by her family, especially her husband Aikanaka, who demanded more and more work from her. She, therefore, decided to leave and take her personal belongings with her. She first tried to visit the sun, but that trip became blistering hot. She decided instead to set out for the moon on a moon rainbow and just barely escaped the clutching hands of her ungrateful husband.

In Tahiti, however, the tone of the story is far different. Hina and her brother Rū were famous voyagers who had traveled throughout the islands and who had visited faraway places such as New Zealand, Hawai'i, Sāmoa, and the Cook Islands. One day, Hina's curiosity about the exotic character of the moon caused her to pack up her belongings and to set out in her famous canoe to visit this faraway destination. Once there, she was pleased with its solitude, and she decided to stay. Today, Tahitians see Hina in the moon sitting with her calabash (gourd) full of her personal belongings, especially her tapa-beating implements. The shadows of the moon are said to be branches of the breadfruit tree from which Hina makes her tapa. Once, it is said, Hina attempted to climb the tree, but one of the branches fell and landed on the island of Rā'iatea (near Tahiti), and from there breadfruit spread throughout the islands. Today, tour guides on Rā'iatea point out to tourists the exact spot where Hina's breadfruit branch first landed on earth. There also used to be an ancient breadfruit tree that stood in the spot to verify their stories.

Polynesians everywhere place Hina in the legendary stories of their gods, demigods, and heroes. Being the mother or wife of many of these famous personalities, she therefore played major roles in their celebrated exploits. In Tahiti, for example, Hina was the daughter of the sky god Ātea and his wife, Hotu. She and her brother Rū lived on the sacred island of Rā'iatea, where she spent her days beating tapa cloth under a great breadfruit tree. It is said that once she and Rū set out to explore the world. They left through a pass in the reef called Te-

ava-o-Hina and sailed throughout the South Pacific, where they discovered and named many of the Polynesian islands. (One legend, however, claims they were from New Zealand and were the first to “discover” the Tahitian islands.) Having returned and having been satisfied about the world, she then set sail to the moon, where she now resides as the lunar goddess and the goddess of travelers.

In New Zealand, Hina(-uri) is the sister to the popular demigod Māui and is married to Irawaru. Once on a fishing expedition, Irawaru’s success at fishing displeased Māui; whereupon, Māui angrily turned him into a dog. Distraught, Hina threw herself into the sea and sunk to the bottom. Unconsciously, she floated to Motutapu (sacred island), where she was rescued by two brothers who take her to wife. When chief Tinirau heard of the remarkable story of the rescue of the beautiful maiden, he persuaded the two brothers to give Hina to him as his wife. They did, and Hina returned with Tinirau to his home on Motutapu, where she was confronted by Tinirau’s two other jealous wives. The two wives treated her miserably. Hina, however, took revenge. She uttered a powerful incantation, and the two sisters fell dead, face down upon the ground. Meanwhile, Rupe, Hina’s distraught brother, had looked everywhere for her, even up to the tenth heaven of Rehua, where he finally found news about where Hina was living. He immediately turned himself into a pigeon, flew to Motutapu, and returned home with Hina and her newborn son.

In the Tuamotus (French Polynesia), Hina is also identified as the sister to the mighty demigod Hiro (Hilo). Contrary to her brother’s advice, she set out to find the handsome prince Te Rogo-mai-Hiti on the island of Motutapu. On her trip, she sought the services of several sea creatures, which all disappointed her. She first tried to ride upon the back of a flounder, but it only sunk under her weight. Angrily, she beat it flat, snatched out one of its eyes, and placed it on the same side as the other. That is why the flounder is flat with both eyes on the same side. She then hit the rock cod upon the head and crumbled it in. She knocked the turtle on the back with her coconut and caused the lump on the upper end of the turtle’s back. Finally, she climbed aboard a whale and cracked her coconut open on its tail. This is why the whale’s tail is split. She finally arrived at Motutapu and married her handsome prince. Meanwhile, her brother Hiro had set out to find her, and after many exciting adventures, he found her and her husband and was reconciled with them.

In Sāmoa, Sina is not only recognized there as the “woman in the moon” who beats her tapa cloth and who guards travelers at night, but she is also identified as the daughter of the creator god Tagaloa (Kanaloa), who sent her down from heaven in the form of a pigeon to locate the first dry earth. Time after time she visited the earth, until she finally discovered a rock rising from the crashing waves of the ocean. Upon each visit, Sina found the rock growing larger and





*Illustration 3.28: A beautiful 'ōhi'a lehua (Metrosideros collina) blossom of Hawai'i, sacred to the goddess Hina. (U.S. Geological Survey)*

larger, and eventually Tagaloa sent her down once more with a creeping vine that she placed upon the rock. Shortly thereafter, the green vine turned into the first human. She is also identified as the wife of the famous hero Tigilau (Kini-lau) who, in the form of a bird, rescued her. The Samoans also tell the story of Sina and the origin of the coconut, a story told throughout most of Polynesia.

In the Marquesas, Tahiti, and other parts of French Polynesia, Hina is recognized as the wife of Ti'i, the first man, and the mother of all humankind. At first, she was born as the goddess, Hina-maha'i-tua-mea, but she was given in marriage to Ti'i, and the children of this sacred union became the ruling family of Tahiti. Children that Ti'i and Hina simply "conjured up" became the commoners, and the intermarriage between the two groups of children created the upper class of society.

It is in Hawai'i, however, where Hina is given the highest ranking. There, she and her husband Kū are revered as the greatest ancestral gods of all the heav-

ens and earth. They were the first of all the gods and goddesses to arrive in the islands, even before the powerful gods Kāne, Kanaloa, Māui, and Lono. Kū thus presides over the male gods, while Hina presides over the female. As such, Kū represents the male generating power, while Hina represents the female power of growth and reproduction. Kū symbolizes “rising upright,” and Hina means “lying down.” Thus the rising sun is Kū, and the setting sun is Hina. The morning belongs to Kū and the afternoon to Hina. The elaborate sexual symbolism of this pair permeates many Hawaiian stories. Hawaiian legends also tell the story of how the great creator god Wākea (vast space) seduces Hina after his first wife, Papa, leaves him to return to Tahiti. After some length of time, Hina becomes pregnant and brings forth the island of Molokaʻi “to the great rage of Papa.” Papa eventually returns to Hawaiʻi and is reconciled with Wākea, and afterwards they become the parents of other Hawaiian islands.

Hina is also the goddess of the *ʻōhiʻa lehua* (*Metrosideros collina*) tree, whose sacred flowers (see Illustration 3.28) play a major role in modern-day hula competitions. As in other parts of Polynesia, Hawaiians know Hina as the goddess in the moon, who spends her time beating out her tapa cloth; as wife of the great voyager Kahaʻi whose son Laka encounters all forms of supernatural encounters in his epic voyages; as the mother of the famous demigod Māui; and as the mother of the pig god Kamupuaʻa.

The name Hina permeates Polynesia, and it is not surprising to hear that the most popular name for newborn girls is Hina.

**See also** Hiro; Kamupuaʻa; Māui; Rata or Laka; Rū; Wākea

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## HIRO

Cultural Group: Tuamotus

The mythical figure Hiro (Hilo, Iro, or Whiro) is known throughout Eastern Polynesia as a god of thieves, but in the Tuamotus he is recognized as a demigod whose voyaging exploits border on the epic. A published résumé of the entire legend occupies over fifty pages, and it is said that the whole narrative in the Tuamotuan language would take several days to tell.

Similar to mythical gods and goddesses elsewhere in the world, the Tuamotuan Hiro embodies both good and bad characteristics. Just as Zeus might secretly visit the earth and seduce a mortal woman without his wife knowing

it, so the same can be said about Hiro. Just as the Hiro epic relates the deeds of heroic and fearless demigods, the story also contains elements of hatred, domestic violence, incest, revenge, and murder. There are also references to explicit sexual acts, and these may be offensive to some modern readers, but to the ancient Polynesians, these references were descriptions of normal relations between two human beings, and they carried no immoral implications whatsoever.

The story begins with the mighty warrior “Hiro the Tall” who once sailed from his homeland in search of adventure. He arrived at an island called Upper Havaiki. After landing, he met a group of people who were heading toward a village where the king was sponsoring a dance competition. The prize was the king’s own daughter’s hand in marriage. Hiro was intrigued, so he joined the group and traveled with them to the village. That evening, the dance drums sounded loudly, and the contest began. The king’s daughter Tiaki-tau danced with every contestant. Hiro, however, waited until last. When it came his turn, he threw his poncho over his head so that Tiaki-tau could not see his face and danced more intensely and expertly than all the others. This “mysterious” dancer intrigued the king’s daughter so much that she yearned to see his face. Upon the completion of the dance, she snatched his poncho away and saw his handsome face. Her “mysterious” dancer, however, dashed away without leaving a trace. Young Tiaki-tau was in tears. Here she had found the perfect suitor only to have him vanish in the night. A search by the king’s servants found nothing. Another dance competition was called for the next night, and again Hiro waited until the last competitor to participate. This time, he did not hide his face, and immediately Tiaki-tau announced to the people that she had found the love she so desired. The couple retired to her home, and the next morning she announced her marriage choice to her parents, but the king demanded that Hiro had to pass another test, because Tiaki-tau was not only beautiful, but she was also the daughter of the king. Hiro had to go and fetch a gourd full of sweet-scented oil that belonged to a mean, old ogress named Nona.

Hiro set out to do what he had been asked. In the meantime, however, the ogress had heard of the king’s plot, and she planned an ambush. While on his way, Hiro’s spirit companions warned him of Nona’s intent and told him the best way to steal her gourd. He waited until nightfall, and when Nona was asleep, Hiro entered the cave and destroyed her secret powers that were hidden in two magical caskets. He then grabbed the gourd with the sweet-scented oil and rushed out. Hearing the noise, Nona awoke and tried to gather up her powers, but without success. Her powers and magic were gone. Safely, Hiro returned to his bride and gave the gourd to the king, who then finally consented to their marriage.

The day of the marriage arrived, and the king had planned a grand reception. Everyone was enjoying the singing and dance. Just before the actual marriage ceremony, however, the young princess arose and performed a solo dance. Out of nowhere, a violent wind appeared, descended upon the gathering, and snatched the young princess away. It was none other than the demon Mata-mata-aho, who kidnapped and carried the young princess off to his home at the bottom of the sea. Everyone was distraught over the loss of the lovely Tiaki-tau—none more so, however, than her intended husband, Hiro. Again, Hiro's spirit companions told him where Mata-mata-aho was hiding and what he needed to do to rescue his bride. He put out to sea, where he was confronted by a giant whale. He speared the whale in its head and began paddling swiftly, while the whale thrashed about behind. Finally, the whale gave up and died. Its body sank to the bottom of the sea, and from it emerged Mata-mata-aho with the Princess Tiaki-tau. They both swam swiftly to the surface, where Hiro was waiting for them. Mata-mata-aho, however, grabbed Tiaki-tau and held her over his head for defense. Hiro, however, aimed closely, speared the monster, and saved his bride-to-be. The couple returned to Havaiki, where a joyous people thanked Hiro for what he had done. As a reward, the king retired and bestowed all of his treasures and power upon his new son-in-law.

Hiro and Tiaki-tau lived together for many years and had two sons, Tautu and Marama, and a daughter Piho, but Tautu was his father's favorite. By the time the children had grown up, the family had moved to another island called Tonga-nui, and King Puna was their sovereign. One day, the king sent word that he wished Tautu to come and be his chief servant, and Tautu willingly agreed. King Puna's sons, however, disliked the new arrival and arranged to cause his downfall. Soon afterwards, the king sent his sons and Tautu fishing for mullet, a favorite of the king. When the men returned, however, the sons cooked and ate the best portions for themselves. When the king saw what was left for himself, he was enraged and ordered them to fish again the next day. Again, and against Tautu's advice, the sons cooked and ate the best portions for themselves, and again the king was upset. Disgruntled, the king commanded them to go out the third day and catch a turtle. They did, and again, the sons ate the best portion. This time, the king demanded retribution, and he called for the beheading of Tautu, whom he felt responsible. Rather than undergo such humiliation, Tautu committed suicide. After some investigation, the king learned of the deception of his sons and with his magical powers restored Tautu to life but imprisoned him inside a tree. Meanwhile, Hiro was becoming impatient for the return of his son. When messengers came to him with news of his son's imprisonment, he swore revenge and began building a large, double-hulled canoe to set sail.

All the while, affairs had not been good between Hiro and Tiaki-tau. Apparently, Tiaki-tau was in the habit of spending much of her time gossiping with her neighbors. On several occasions, Hiro overheard his wife making disparaging remarks about the size of his penis. Of course, he was enraged and forbade her never to visit her friends again. Tiaki-tau then started spending her time helping her husband in the building of his canoe. While she was helping lash the timbers together, she accidentally got her finger caught and could not free herself. Rather than help her, Hiro, who was still enraged over her gossiping remarks, snatched up a mallet and clubbed her to death. He took her body, flung it into a pit, and covered it up with sand. The once beautiful marriage had now ended in tragedy.

That evening, Marama returned home and learned of his mother's death. Grieving, he found her body and carried her body to the *marae* (temple), where he gently placed her and sang a painful dirge.

Meanwhile, Hiro asked his daughter, Piho, where Marama had gone. She told him she did not know. Hiro, however, knew of Marama's disobedience and that Piho was lying, and he planned revenge. He told Piho that the next day she had to set out to find Marama, but Hiro also gave her precise instructions on how she should do it. The next day, Piho set out and every so often would stop and shout, "O Marama, here is your food; my lips are tainted with passion." As instructed, she would then raise up her clothing (poncho) to hide her face and at the same time to reveal her nude body beneath. Marama eventually spied her and, not seeing her face, did not recognize her. He only saw the voluptuous nude body of a beautiful young girl. Sexually aroused at such beauty, Marama grabbed Piho and seduced her. Afterwards, Piho pulled down the poncho and unveiled her face. In shame, Marama realized that through his father's trickery he had seduced his own sister. He swore revenge upon his father. As they traveled home, Marama and Piho took the route through King Puna's lands, where they released their brother from prison and told him of their father's dastardly deed. They finally reached home, where Hiro's army was waiting for them. The children slew all of their father's army, and Hiro retreated in his great canoe. Tautu then became the guardian of Hiro's lands, while Marama planned to set out and rescue his mother's spirit from the underworld.

Marama began his preparations by building a huge ship, one he would call *Hotu-taihi-nui*. He hiked up into the mountains to fell a suitable tree. He returned home, however, without first performing the proper rituals and ceremonies in building a canoe. A few hours later, several neighbors ran and told him that they had seen his tree roll down the mountainside and float out to sea. Marama would not believe them, so he returned to the mountainside, and sure enough the tree was gone. Hurriedly, Marama sought the aid of a *tahunga*

(priest), who informed him that he had not followed the prescribed rituals and gave him instructions on what he should do. Doing as he was told, Marama swam out to sea, dove down to the bottom, found his log, and released it from its entanglement. When the log floated to the surface, it gave Marama a lecture on what he should have done to make his ship of vengeance. Marama complied with all that he had been told. That night Marama had horrible nightmares and awoke several times. He told his *tahunga* that he dreamed he saw the ship already completed. The next morning when Marama rushed out of his hut, he looked and saw the beautiful ship, the *Hotu-taihi-nui*, floating in the bay before him. Quickly, he selected a crew and made the needed preparations of food and provisions for a long journey. Once out to sea, Marama gave specific instructions to the crew on what was to be done. While he slept, the crew became lax in its duties and failed to follow his precise instructions. As a result, the ship sank to the bottom of the ocean, the crew floated to the surface, and Marama kept sleeping for three months. He finally awoke, however, swam to the surface, retrieved his crew and ship, and continued his journey to the underworld to rescue his mother.

Finally, he reached the underworld, where he encountered two wicked witches who seduced him into sleeping with them in return for their help. Later that night while Hiro slept, the two witches conjured up his mother's spirit, and she appeared before her son. He awoke, embraced his mother, and convinced her to return to the upper world with him. She did, but as they traveled back home, they encountered numerous demons who wished to thwart their travels. Each time, however, Marama threatened them with his club, and they disappeared in the night. They finally reached the upper world, where his mother's spirit entered back into her body, and they then sailed back home to Tonga-nui.

Meanwhile, Hiro's sister Hina set out on an adventure of her own, where she met and married a handsome prince from Motu-tapu named Te-Rogo-mai-Hiti. (See the entry "Hina" in this chapter for details of her adventures.)

Hiro learned of his sister's disobedience and set out in his mighty ship to find her. During the course of the journey, Hiro warned his crew not to bother a giant white-tailed bird that flew around and belonged to the god Tāne. While Hiro slept, the bird swooped down upon the ship and its droppings fell onto the deck until it was full. The crew was furious, and when the bird made another swoop, they grabbed it and clubbed it to death. Hiro finally awoke and was upset at what had happened, but advised the crew that since the bird was dead they might as well cook and eat it for all the damage it had caused. The ship's captain, however, feared the wrath of the great god Tāne and with his magical incantations resurrected the bird from the few body parts that were left. The bird



flew home and told Tāne what had happened. Enraged, Tāne called upon the wild north winds, which blew so hard they toppled Hiro's boat. Similar to the Marama incident earlier, the crew swam to the surface while Hiro slept below the waves for nearly eleven months ("cycles").

At last, Hiro awoke, swam to the surface, regained his ship and crew, and set out once again to find Hina. His magnificent ship forged ahead through the rough seas until they finally reached the island and came ashore. Hina was waiting for them on the beach, and she hesitantly approached her brother, but instead of hatred and pain, tears of joy rolled down their cheeks, and the two were reconciled. Hiro returned to his ship and set sail to a land called Rangi-Varu (Eighth Heaven).

On Rangi-Varu, Hiro met a beautiful and seductive queen called Fakahotu. They both fell in love and made passionate love to each other. A short time after, Hiro decided to continue his journey, whereupon the queen begged him to stay and informed him that she was pregnant. Hiro, however, told her that he had already decided to leave, but that he would soon return. Upon reaching his destination, the island of Havaiki, Hiro met a warrior king, Te Hono, who challenged him to battle. They both fought valiantly, but eventually it ended in a draw, and Hiro returned to Rangi-Varu in peace.

On the same island, there also lived a beautiful princess named Mongi-Here who possessed great magical powers. Hiro's curiosity got the best of him, and he decided to visit the lovely princess. Mongi-Here, however, wished nothing to do with the brash navigator, and as Hiro's ship neared her home, she first caused the wind to stop so that Hiro and his crew had to paddle toward shore. Then she conjured up a great gale that blew in the opposite direction. Not to be outdone, Hiro invoked his magical spells and the wind became calm again. When Hiro landed, the local people told him that Mongi-Here had gone eel fishing and would return eventually. Hiro waited and finally became impatient. He set out to find her, and then realized that she had played a trick on him. He decided to get revenge. He reached the beach where he covered himself up with sand except his penis, which stood erect. Mongi-Here noticed the strange object on the seashore and bent down and picked it up. Immediately, Hiro stood up, and the princess was terribly embarrassed, but moreover, she was outraged over his shameful trick. She summoned up all her powerful wind reserves that blew down, picked her up, and carried her away while she sang a song of rage. Hiro, however, interpreted her song as a sign of love and followed her in his ship. He caught up with her several times, but each time she flew away just as he got within reach. At last they arrived at the gates of Havaiki, where Hiro again caught up with her. He proclaimed, "Because of my love for you, I faced the storm and peril of the sea with unfaltering courage—nor did I once draw back."



Impressed with his expressed devotion, the princess let go of all her anger and fury. The couple passed through the gates of the underworld to the world above and made their way to Hiro's home, where they lived happily ever after.

The adventures of Hiro are concluded.

**See also** Hawaiiki; Hina; Ocean; Rata or Laka; Sex and Sexuality; Tāne; Tinirau; Underworld

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## HOTU-MATUA

Cultural Group: Rapanui (Easter Island)

Hotu-Matua, the first to discover and settle Rapanui (Easter Island) about fifteen hundred years ago, ranks as one of the greatest Polynesian explorers of all times. Easter Island legends claim that he and his followers originally came from an island called Marae-Renga, lying far to the west. (Actually, linguistic and cultural research place the origins of the Rapanui in the Marquesas Islands, over two thousand miles northwest of Easter Island.) The legends say that war raged on Marae-Renga between Chief Hotu-Matua and Chief Oroï because Oroï had been humiliated by Hotu-Matua's fickle sister-in-law. As a result, Oroï had sworn revenge against the family.

Seeking some sort of solution to this conflict, Hotu-Matua consulted his advisor Haumaka, who told him that he had had a dream of a fair island lying far to the east. Hotu-Matua took it as a good omen and believed that the island could become a new home for him and his people. He then ordered a scouting party of six men to set out in advance to find the island. They stocked their canoe, *Te Oraora Miro* (*The Living Wood*), with sufficient provisions for a long journey and with starts of useful plants they would need once they arrived. They sailed two months before they finally discovered the island. After landing, they planted their yam starts so that they could soon have food. Then, they scouted the island to find a suitable location for the residence of Chief Hotu-Matua.

When the scouting party reached Orongo point in the southwest, it spied two large canoes on the horizon. One belonged to Hotu-Matua and the other to his priest Tu'u-ko-ihu. When the double-hulled canoes landed, traditions say there were approximately four hundred men, women, and children aboard each vessel. When they landed, the wives of both Hotu-Matua and Tu'u-ko-ihu gave birth simultaneously—a son, Tu'u-ma-heki, to Hotu-Matua and a daughter, Avareipua, to Tu'u-ko-ihu. After the proper navel-cutting ceremonies were concluded, the rest of the people disembarked and made their way inland, where they eventually settled.

The story becomes intriguing when it was learned that Hotu-Matua's old rival, Chief Oroi, had secretly hidden himself in the hull of the priest's canoe and had come with them. Once the ship had landed, Oroi secretly disembarked by nightfall and went into hiding for some time. He waited until the time he could take his revenge. Finally one day, six of Hotu-Matua's children came down to the beach to bathe. As they fell asleep on the rocks, Oroi came from his hiding place and savagely killed them one by one. The old conflict between the two rival chiefs began all over again. Eventually, Chief Oroi was captured and slain, leaving only Hotu-Matua as the high chief on the island. The people of Rapanui multiplied and settled throughout the island, and they were not to be visited again until the first white men (a Dutch crew under the leadership of Jacob Roggeveen) landed on their shores on Easter Day, 5 April 1722.

**See also** Birdman Cult; Hawai'i-loa; Hawaiki; Kupe and Turi; Migrations; *Moai*, Easter Island; Rū

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## **‘IO, IHOIHI, OR KIHO**

Cultural Group: Eastern Polynesia

Many contemporary Polynesians from Hawai'i, New Zealand, the Society Islands, the Tuamotus, and the Marquesas tell creation stories that closely parallel those found in the Christian Bible. They claim that a supreme being, named 'Io, Ihoiho, or Kiho, created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, that he created the first man out of the red earth, and that while the man was asleep, 'Io took a rib from man's side and formed the first woman. They continue to tell you that a Polynesian "Noah" was warned by 'Io to construct an ark to save humans and animals from a great flood (deluge), and they describe the afterlife in terms of a heaven where the righteous go and a hell designated for sinners.

This Christian concept of the creation contradicts the traditionally held Polynesian view, in which creation came about as a result of pairing between the various forces of nature that led from one creation to another. For example, Sky Father and Earth Mother conjoined to form the various heavenly and earthly forms—the gods, sky, moon, animals, plants, human beings, and so forth.

Debate on the authenticity of these creation stories began very early after European contact, and it continued well into the twentieth century. In Tahiti,

for example, where missionaries arrived in 1797, Polynesian creation stories that sounded very much like the biblical account started appearing two generations later. The Reverend William Ellis, an early Christian missionary to Hawai'i and Tahiti, wrote in 1829 that he never placed any reliance on these stories because he felt they were merely recitations of accounts the Polynesians had heard from some European. One of the most famous Polynesian scholars, Sir Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa), agreed when he wrote in 1949 that these teachings were confused and contradictory and that they were post-European additions after knowledge of the biblical creation was acquired. In Hawai'i, the god 'Io was not known until after 1920, and the "Christian" stories of the creation were not part of the true Hawaiian tradition. They have been traced to adulterations made to Hawaiian mythology in the mid-nineteenth century and further popularized through their publication in the local newspapers. Many of the adulterations of Marquesan myths can be attributed to Thomas Clifton Lawson, a sailor who visited the Marquesas in 1843, and who wrote numerous letters to the Christian missionaries in Hawai'i in hopes of getting his writings published. Even the Christian missionaries in Hawai'i did not believe them, but several of his chants were published by other Europeans in the late nineteenth century—Fornander, for example. In 1923, Edward S. Handy, a highly respected scholar, reported that the chants were fictitious fabrications of a European mind. One, he said, sounded like it had been translated from English into Marquesan and not the other way around.

Dorothy B. Barrère, one of the foremost scholars of Polynesian mythology, carefully summarizes the debate in her 1967 article. She concludes that toward the end of the pre-European history of Polynesia, there were certain Polynesian gods that had gained ascendancy in the islands' cosmology—Ta'aroa in Tahiti and 'Io in New Zealand, for example—and that it was a simple matter for the Polynesians to merge these concepts with the newly introduced Christian god. Adulterations were made to their traditional beliefs by influential Polynesians, and these changes were then passed down from generation to generation as being ancient, indigenous teachings.

**See also** Deluge; *Kumulipo*; Priests; Rangi and Papa; Storytelling and Chants; Tangaloa; Underworld

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**KAMAPUA'A**

Cultural Group: Hawai'i

Kamapua'a ("Kah-mah-poo-ah'ah") is one of the most popular *kupua* (demigods) in all of Hawai'i. Contemporary children's books recount the unique exploits of this peculiar Hawaiian *kupua* who is half man and half pig (*pua'a*) and who can miraculously turn himself into any animal, fish, or plant at will. Even when in human form, Kamapua'a maintains some physical characteristics of a hog—stiff, black bristles down his back, for example, which he always covers by wearing a cape. Brave, adventuresome, and mischievous, he falls madly in love with many women while avoiding all forms of responsibility and duty. He also succeeds in all of his endeavors, and for all of these reasons, or in spite of these, he is well liked by all those who read his stories.

Several versions of his exploits have survived, the longest of which, it is said, takes over sixteen hours to tell. Generally, the epics are organized around his four major battles. The first tells of his birth and his conflict with his father-in-law, Olopana, on the island of O'ahu; the second details the struggle between him and a rival chief on Kaua'i; the third occurs in Kahiki (Tahiti?) between him and Lono-of-the-eight-foreheads-of-stone; and the fourth tells of his quarrel with Pele, the volcano goddess, on the island of Hawai'i.

The Kamapua'a traditions are considered to be ancient, dating perhaps back to the early migrations of Polynesians to Hawai'i, and Kamapua'a's genealogy reveals that he is descended from the early gods. The stories of Kamapua'a are unique—nowhere else in Polynesia is a pig worshiped as a god. The epic begins actually with the exploits of his grandmother, Ka-maunu-a-niho, a chieftainess and sorceress who sailed from Kahiki to Hawai'i, where she and her family landed on the island of Māui. She and her second husband, Kalana-nu'u-nui-kua-mamao, had a daughter named Hina, who married Olopana, an old chief on O'ahu, but unfortunately Hina fell in love with his younger brother, Kahiki-'ula. This illicit love affair between Hina and Kahiki-'ula produced a son called Kamapua'a (child-hog). Some say that it was this illicit love affair that may have caused the deformity of the young child. Olopana was furious at Hina's deception, and it is said that upon Kamapua'a's birth, his half-brother saved him from the wrath of Olopana by taking him to live with his grandmother. Apparently, Kamapua'a learned much of his trickery and sorcery at his grandmother's knees.

As Kamapua'a matured, he grew into a handsome, smart, and strong individual with godlike characteristics, all of which increased Olopana's hatred of him. In retaliation, Kamapua'a collected a group of young men, plundered Olopana's lands, and robbed him of his prized chickens. Kamapua'a was caught several times, and on each occasion his grandmother released him with her magical spells. At wit's end, Olopana sought the advice of an old *kahuna* (priest),

who appeared to be loyal to him. Kamapua'a was captured once more and was destined to be sacrificed the next morning in a *heiau* (outdoor temple). The old priest, however, supported Kamapua'a and secretly instructed his servants just to act as if they were tying Kamapua'a's arms and legs to the altar. When Olopana showed up the next morning to witness the sacrifice, Kamapua'a rose up and slayed him and all of his men except Makali'i, his uncle, the ruling chief of Kaua'i.

Then recognized as the ruling chief of O'ahu, Kamapua'a, however, gave it all up. He assumed the form of a large fish and swam from O'ahu to the island of Kaua'i, where he became embroiled in the struggle between his uncle Makali'i and a subordinate chief called Kāne-iki. Kāne-iki had two lovely daughters, whom Kamapua'a courted and married. He took up the cause of his new father-in-law and went into battle against his own uncle. Using his magical powers, Kamapua'a turned himself into a ferocious hog with human hands to wield his spears. He defeated Makali'i's forces and banished him to the mountains. Once again, Kamapua'a gained a chiefly title, but again it was only short-lived. His immediate family on O'ahu—his father, mother, and brother—heard of the family feud and sailed to Kaua'i to take up Makali'i's cause. In anger, Kamapua'a renounced his family, left Kaua'i, and sailed to a faraway, mystical island, an island of his ancestors, an island called Kahiki.

In Kahiki, Kamapua'a encountered two rival chiefs at war—Lonokaeho and Kowea. Knowing Kamapua'a's weakness for women, Kowea gave his two beautiful daughters to Kamapua'a for wives. Similar to the situation on Kaua'i, Kamapua'a took up his father-in-law's cause and went to battle against Lonokaeho, a demon who had eight stone foreheads. Lonokaeho attacked Kamapua'a, but as his foreheads came down to strike Kamapua'a, they hit the lava rocks instead and became dull. Using his own supernatural forces, Kamapua'a called upon his plant resources, which rose up and entangled Lonokaeho while Kamapua'a struck him down. Kamapua'a's accompanying horde of pigs furiously rushed upon Lonokaeho and devoured him and his followers. Shortly after this battle, Kamapua'a happened upon the strongest man in Kahiki. It was none other than Kū-'ilio-loa, a demigod similar to Kamapua'a but who could turn himself into the form of a dog. Apparently, Kū-'ilio-loa's two wives had requested Kamapua'a to help them in their domestic struggle against their wrathful husband. As payment for his services, they swore to be his wives. Face to face, the two opponents stood their ground. Kū-'ilio-loa snarled and showed his canine teeth, while Kamapua'a turned into a monstrous hog. As the battle began, Kamapua'a called upon his plant resources once again to come to his aid. They appeared, wrapped themselves around Kū-'ilio-loa, and held his mouth open while the horde of hogs entered his body and devoured him.

Kamapua'a's fourth and final epic details his battle and love affair with Pele, the volcano goddess. Briefly, the story tells of Kamapua'a's attempt to gain the love of the beautiful Pele on the island of Hawai'i. Pele rejected his offer and sent molten lava to engulf him. Kamapua'a, however, sent a deluge of water that extinguished her flames. A compromise was finally agreed upon, and the two divided the island of Hawai'i between them. Ironically, the two became lovers, and their son, 'Ōpeli-nui-kau-ha'alilo, became the progenitor of the ruling chiefs of Hawai'i. (See the "Pele (Pere)" entry later in this chapter for further details of this particular epic.)

Numerous geographical sites in Hawai'i are connected to the Kamapua'a stories. Modern-day tour guides are eager to point out, for example, the gaps in the mountains slashed out as a result of Kamapua'a's battles with his rivals or the "Waters of Mō'ili'ili" (a district of Waikīkī) where two sisters, fleeing from Kamapua'a, turned themselves into gushing springs. Sightings of Kamapua'a, too, are frequent. Just a few years ago, several neighbors near Hau'ula (northeast shore of O'ahu) swore they saw Kamapua'a and chased him into the hills, but his hoofprints disappeared abruptly at a barbed wire fence. Most who know of him will agree that Kamapua'a is still one of the most intriguing and mysterious *kupua* in all of Hawaiian myths.

**See also** Dogs; Pele (Pere)

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## KĀNE

Cultural Group: Hawai'i

The powerful god Kāne ("Kah-nay") in Hawai'i is the counterpart of Tāne in Tahiti and New Zealand. But in Hawai'i, he is recognized as the principal god, the god of creation, the progenitor of all chiefs and commoners alike. In the creation, he was assisted by two other powerful gods, Kū and Lono, and the highest of the three heavens they first created was reserved for Kāne alone. Several Hawaiian chants of Kāne were set down in writing in the nineteenth century,

but all seem to have been influenced significantly by the early Christian missionaries, who arrived in 1819. In these Hawaiian myths, for example, there is a trinity of gods—Kāne, Kū, and Lono—and a creation of the heavens and earth in five days. On the sixth day, they created a man (Kumuhonua) and woman (Lalohonua) in an earthly paradise called the great land of Kāne, and on the seventh day they rested. These stories are strikingly different than the Kumulipo creation story as told by King Kalākaua (d. 1891) in which the creation is told in terms of pairings or matings between female and male from the simplest creature up to the formation of humans and the royal family of King Kalākaua.

Despite these contradictions and similarities to Christian beliefs, there is no doubt that Kāne worship occupied the highest status in ancient Hawai'i. Every family worshipped Kāne in one form or another, and although there might be thousands of epithets beginning with the name Kāne, they all refer back to the mighty Kāne. For example, the thunder god Kāne-hekili is literally an *'aumakua* (lesser family god) worshiped on the island of Māui, but who is essentially only one of the many manifestations of the supreme god Kāne. Prayers to the god Kāne, such as the one that follows, were heard in all the Hawaiian *heiau* (temples):

O Kāne-of-the-great-lightning,  
 O Kāne-of-the-great-proclaiming-voice,  
 O Kāne-of-the-small-proclaiming-voice,  
 Silently listening in the mountains—  
 In the great mountains,  
 In the low mountains,  
 O Kāne-of-the-thunder,  
 O Kāne-of-pale-flowers,  
 . . .  
 A petitioning voice to you all, my guardians,  
 The male *'aumakua*,  
 The female *'aumakua*,  
 Turn all of you.  
 Guardians of the night and of the day,  
 I am your offspring,  
 To me, the man, grant life! (Beckwith 1940, 55–56.)

The mythical *Kāne-hānā-moku* (Hidden land of Kāne) where Kāne dwells is a floating cloud that lies midway between earth and heaven, a paradise where once the first man dwelt before he was forced out. It lies to the west of the Hawaiian island chain, off the coast of Kaua'i, and some Hawaiians maintain that it has been visited by mortal beings on more than one occasion. It is also



the location of the *Wai-akua-a-Kāne* (sacred water of life of Kāne), whose magical properties include the resurrection of humans who are sprinkled with it. Hundreds of mortals have been known to set out to find the sacred island in their canoes, but very few have ever returned.

*See also* 'Io, Ihoihi, or Kiho; Tāne; Tangaloa; Underworld

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## KAVA

Cultural Group: Most of Polynesia.

In Polynesia, kava ('awa in Hawai'i) is a drink prepared from the roots of the *Piper methystium* (member of the pepper plant), and it can be used in official ceremonies or drunk as one would a bottle of soda or beer (see Illustration 3.29). It is nonalcoholic, but it does produce a type of euphoria or relaxation. Drunk to the extreme, it can produce immobilization of the limbs and deep sleep. Until recently (within the last ten years), kava was unknown outside of the Pacific islands, but since then, Asian and Western pharmaceutical companies have learned of its soothing effects and have begun manufacturing and distributing it worldwide. Kava bars have sprung up in many large metropolitan cities, but kava is more popularly distributed in pill form, where individuals usually take two pills (1,200 milligrams) to reduce stress and promote relaxation.

In Tonga, the drink plays a vital role in any official ceremony, whether on a national or local level. An ancient and strict protocol regulates the way it is made fresh from the kava roots and the precise manner in which it is offered to all the dignitaries present. Tongan mythology offers several stories on the origin of the kava plant, but most of them contain a similar theme. High Chief Loau decided to visit his servant Feva'anga and his wife Fefafa on the island of 'Eueiki during a severe famine. Unfortunately, his servants had nothing appropriate to offer their chief to eat except their daughter Kava'onau, who suffers from leprosy. The couple cooks the meal and presents it before their chief. Realizing what has happened, Loau refuses to eat the meal, but tells his servants to take the food and bury it in the back of the house. They bury the head in one spot and the innards in another. Five days later, two strange, new plants emerge from the graves. From the daughter's head grows a plant called "kava" and from the other a plant called "sugarcane." When the plants mature, the couple takes them to Loau, who teaches them about their use. The root of the kava is pulverized, mixed with water, and served in the leaves of the banana plant.

Other islands suggest that the kava was originally the drink of the heavenly gods, and it was introduced to earth through various means. The Samoans claim



*Illustration 3.29: A kava ceremony being performed in Sāmoa. Kava is drunk throughout most of Polynesia, although several of the island groups reserve it only for special occasions. (Jack Fields/CORBIS)*

the god Tangaloa once visited the earth and desired to have kava to drink. Not finding any available, he returned to the heavens where he dug up a plant and brought it back to earth. Once introduced to earth, kava retained its sacred nature and was, therefore, used in all of the official religious ceremonies. The ancient Hawaiians, for example, used ‘awa as a type of holy water, which they poured or sprinkled over their sacred images in their *heiau* (temples). Even the vessels that contained the ‘awa were considered sacred and had to be diligently washed and cared for. Various species of the plant exist, and the Hawaiians designated each for a particular class within the society, the most sacred, of course, being reserved for the high chiefs and deities.

**See also** Breadfruit, Origin of; Coconut, Origin of the; Plants (Food)

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**KUMULIPO**

Cultural Group: Hawai'i

The *Kumulipo* (Beginning in deep darkness) is a sacred Hawaiian creation chant that belonged to the family of King Kalākaua (1836–1891). During his reign (1874–1891), the king made the chant public for the first time, and upon his death, the manuscript passed to his sister, Queen Lili'uokalani (1839–1917), who translated it into English and published it 1897. In 1951, Martha Beckwith, a renowned scholar of Hawaiian mythology, retranslated the manuscript, added important commentary and annotations, and published it again.

The 2,000-line chant was composed in commemoration of the birth of High Chief Ka-'i-'i-mamao, one of King Kalākaua's ancestors, born about A.D. 1700. It was recited again upon his death and never chanted again until British explorer Captain James Cook first visited the islands in 1779. After it was performed for Captain Cook, it was held in secret again until the time of Kalākaua's reign. The king may have revealed it at that time in order to strengthen his shaky claim to the throne upon the death of the last Kamehameha dynasty. The chant traces Kalākaua's "divine origin" back through all generations of time to the first spark of life in the universe. For this reason, it is often referred to as a Hawaiian creation chant.

But it is considered even more than that. Hawaiian chants frequently have various levels of meaning under the surface of the literal message of the words. This process of embedding meaning in Hawaiian chants is called *kaona* and is commonly used throughout Polynesia by poets and chanters. In her commentaries on the *Kumulipo*, Beckwith offers various interpretations given to her by other Hawaiian authorities on the chant's real meaning.

On the surface, the chant reveals an evolutionary process of the creation of the world. It begins in the deep darkness (*pō*). Then in a process of conception and birth from one generation to another, it moves from the depths of the ocean with its teeming fish and sea creatures to the creation of land, the separation of the sky and earth, to the creation of land animals, and finally to the creation of humans and the royal family of High Chief Ka-'i-'i-mamao. The text ends with the birth of the young Ka-'i-'i-mamao, who is actually referred to as Lono-i-kamakahi-ho'i in the chant. The opening lines of the *Kumulipo* in English are as follows:

At the time when the earth became hot  
At the time when the heavens turned about  
At the time when the sun was darkened  
To cause the moon to shine  
The time of the rise of the Pleiades

The slime, this was the source of the earth  
 The source of the darkness that made darkness  
 The source of the night that made night  
 The intense darkness, the deep darkness  
 Darkness of the sun, darkness of the night  
 Nothing but night.  
 The night gave birth  
 Born was Kumulipo in the night, a male  
 Born was Po'ele in the night, a female  
 Born was the coral polyp, born was the coral, came forth  
 Born was the grub that digs and heaps upon the earth, came forth  
 Born was his [child] an earthworm, came forth  
 Born was the starfish, his child the small starfish came forth  
 Born was the sea cucumber, his child the small sea cucumber came forth  
 . . .  
 Multiplying in the passing time  
 The long night slips along  
 Fruitful, very fruitful  
 Spreading here, spreading there  
 Spreading this way, spreading that way  
 Propping up earth, holding up the sky  
 The time passes, this night of Kumulipo  
 Still it is night. (Beckwith 1972, 58–60)

*See also* Genealogies; Rangi and Papa; Underworld; Wākea

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## KUPE AND TURI

Cultural Group: New Zealand

Māori legends tell a fascinating adventure of how the great Chief Kupe from Hawaiki became the first person to discover and explore the islands of Aotearoa (New Zealand). They tell of Kupe's return home and how he gave such a glowing description of the new islands to his brother-in-law Turi that Turi gathered his family and friends together and set sail to settle the new land. This is how New Zealand first came to be discovered and settled.

Legends say that over seven hundred years ago, High Chief Kupe ruled the islands of Hawaiki (possibly Tahiti), Rarotonga (in the Cook Islands), and Rangiātea

(Rā'iatea north of Tahiti). Every morning he would send his men out to fish in the ocean. But one day, they caught nothing because something kept stealing the bait off their hooks. This went on for several days, until the crew discovered that it was the doings of a giant octopus, named Muturangi. They tried everything, even threatening to kill it if it did not stop. Nothing worked, so the next day Kupe gathered up his family and fishermen to confront Muturangi with force. Joining him in a companion canoe were his friend Ngāte and his crew.

Once out to sea, they spied Muturangi and sailed after it. After some time, Kupe and Ngāte realized that Muturangi was leading them far out to sea, possibly to another island unknown to them. Days passed and they finally spied an undiscovered island on the horizon that looked like a long white cloud. Kupe named it Aotearoa (Long White Cloud), the Māori name for New Zealand. He landed and explored the east coast while Ngāte's canoe sped after Muturangi. After discovering and naming many of the topographical sites, Kupe caught up with Ngāte and the giant octopus at the southern tip of North Island. Kupe and Ngāte finally confronted Muturangi in battle. (The legends maintain that Muturangi's body was 24 feet wide and its tentacles stretched 240 feet long.) Ngāte devised a plan to slay the beast. He threw several calabashes full of water out into the ocean. Thinking the large calabashes were human beings, Muturangi attacked them. Kupe, however, was on the side waiting for him with his power *paoa* (stone axe). He struck hard at its head and eyes until Muturangi was dead. At that moment, Kupe looked up and for the first time caught a glimpse of the snow-capped mountains of South Island—a sight most likely never seen before by a warm-climate Polynesian. In remembrance of this moment and his final battle with Muturangi, Kupe named South Island “Ara-Paoa” after his powerful axe.

Kupe and Ngāte then explored South Island, where they discovered a precious greenstone called *pounamu* (jade), a mineral resource that is still very popular in New Zealand. Wherever they went, these first explorers found no other people on the islands. Concluding that the islands were uninhabited, Kupe's daughter suggested that they take possession of the island. They all consented, celebrated with a huge feast, and then decided to leave for home.

Once Kupe returned home, he astounded everyone with his tales of his fight with the giant octopus and of his marvelous journeys to a beautiful new island group. Many of his listeners diligently inquired about the islands' exact location, and Kupe replied that they could be reached by sailing to the right of the setting sun, the moon, or Venus during the summer month of Tatau-uru-ora (November).

Among Kupe's listeners was Turi, Kupe's young brother-in-law, who had fled Hawaiiki because he had committed adultery with his chief's wife and had murdered the high priest's son. Turi listened intently as Kupe related the details

of his remarkable expedition to Aotearoa. Afterwards, Turi proposed to Kupe that they gather up their families and provisions and set sail to the islands. Kupe declined the invitation, but repeated his directions so that Turi could find the islands on his own. For some time, Turi made plans for the long voyage. He would take his wife Rongorongo, their small children, and anyone else who wished to accompany them. They would leave in his mighty canoe, the *Aotea*, which his father-in-law had built for him. High Chief Pōtoru, with his family and crew, decided to join Turi in Pōtoru's canoe, called the *Te Ririno*.

Gathering whatever provisions they could, the party secretly left in the dark of the night. The journey, however, was marred by several unpleasant incidents. First, Turi's brother-in-law Tuau had planned to come aboard just to help maneuver the canoe out of the harbor. Unfortunately, when he finally realized how far they had gone, it was too dark to swim back to shore, and Turi refused to turn around. Tuau was devastated that he had to leave his family. The next morning another incident occurred. One of the crew members became insolent and belligerent to Turi, who angrily threw him overboard. After the drowning man repented of his actions and begged for forgiveness, Turi hauled him back aboard the canoe. Days passed and the *Aotea* developed several leaks that threatened to sink it. Fortunately, Turi made his way to a small island where they landed and refurbished the damaged canoe. Once the repairs had been made and the necessary prayers offered to the gods, the crews were ready to set sail. Before they could get under way, however, Turi and Pōtoru disagreed over the exact directions to Aotearoa. Heated words passed between them, and when Turi finally conceded to Pōtoru's proposal, they set out once again. Unfortunately, Pōtoru's directions were wrong, and soon after they had set sail, the two canoes got caught in a swift current that led them toward a dangerous reef. Pōtoru's canoe crashed against the jagged reef, and all that were with him perished. Fortunately, the passengers on the *Aotea* survived. Turi then set his course of direction in line with his original plan, and off they sailed once more, making landfall at Waitemata Harbor in Aotearoa (on the west coast of the North Island). The *Aotea* had fortunately survived the long journey, but when the damaged canoe reached a small bay south of Waitemata, Turi finally bade it farewell and sank it to the bottom. The bay is named Aotea, and local residents swear today that on a clear day they can still see the canoe at the entrance of the bay.

Turi and his party set out on foot, explored the west coast of the island, named topographical sites along the way, and planted their seeds and food cuttings wherever they went. After rounding the peninsula on the west coast, Turi finally settled down at Pātea, a most favorable location that Kupe had suggested to him. Turi's descendants, who currently live throughout the general area, call themselves the tribes of Whanganui and Ngāti-Ruanui.

*See also* Hawai'i-loa; Hawaiki; Migrations; Ocean; Rū

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### LĀ'IE-I-KA-WAI

Cultural Group: Hawai'i

Lā'ie-i-ka-wai ("lah-ee-ā-ee-kah-wai") is the Hawaiian goddess of the twilight, mist, and mirage, and her story is ranked as one of the most popular romances in Hawaiian mythology. It represents one of the many legends about a mortal who, after death, is raised to the status of godhood. Lā'ie and her twin sister Lā'ie-lohelohe were born in the village of Lā'ie (named after Lā'ie-i-ka-wai), located on the northeast shore of the island of O'ahu, to Chief Kahauokapaka and his wife Māla'ekahana. The chief, however, had sworn that he must have a son first, and that any daughters born would not be allowed to live. Unfortunately, Māla'ekahana gave birth to the twin daughters and knowing her husband's oath secretly hid them away with her relatives rather than having them killed. Lā'ie was hidden in a dark cave at the bottom of a deep pool. Some say the pool was the one nicknamed "Beauty Hole" that used to be located in Lā'ie near the beach between Laniloa Point (more popularly called Lā'ie Point) and Temple Beach, about a block from my home when I lived there. My young sons would often fish in the pool, and when it was hot, they would cool off by jumping in, swimming across, and then quickly getting out. It was about fifteen to twenty-five feet across, and some claim that it was so deep it had no bottom. Years ago it had a diving board and a changing shed, but they were washed into Beauty Hole forever during the destructive tidal wave of 1946. Because of its easy access and subsequent dangers, the real estate manager of Lā'ie had it filled in back in 1969, and so the famous pool no longer exists.

After being hidden there for some time, Lā'ie's guardian, Waka, took her to Puna on the Big Island of Hawai'i. There, she was hidden away in a *kapu* (taboo, or sacred) hut, surrounded by a cloud of mist, and guarded by colorful birds until a time when Waka could arrange a suitable marriage for her. Her first suitor was the chief of the island of Kaua'i, but because of his first wife's reappearance, he returned home without Lā'ie. Other suitable suitors from Kaua'i attempted to woo the young chieftainess, but all were rejected. One of these young men, Ai-wohikupua, however, had five goddess sisters who befriended Lā'ie, and when their brother left, they became Lā'ie's best friends and adopted sisters.



A marriage was finally arranged for Lā'ie, but just before it was held, a young scoundrel by the name of Hala-aniani showed up, won her over with the help of his sorceress sister, and carried her away on his surfboard. Lā'ie's guardian set out to track them down, and finally found them sleeping together. He was furious, denounced Lā'ie for her frivolous ways, and stripped her of her chiefly rank and privileges. She was destitute, but one of her adopted sisters was determined to rectify the wrong and decided that her eldest brother, god of the inner sun, was the most suitable husband for Lā'ie. She visited the sun and arranged the match, whereupon her brother descended to earth, revenged the wrongs done to Lā'ie, and took her to live with him in the heavens. Some time later, however, Lā'ie learned that her husband had visited the earth once again and was having an affair with her twin sister. Lā'ie reported this infidelity to his parents, who angrily rescinded his power and banished him to earth to wander forever as a bodiless ghost. Now lonely and without close friends, Lā'ie returned to earth, where she was reunited with her sisters and where she became the goddess of the twilight, mist, and mirage.

**See also** Marriage; Sun God

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## LAND

Cultural Group: Hawai'i

Land throughout ancient Polynesia was owned only by high chiefs and their subordinate leaders. Commoners seldom owned any land that they could call their own. In Hawai'i, all land on a *mokopuni* (island) was theoretically held by the *ali'i nui*, a great high chief, who divided the land into *moku* (districts) and distributed the rights to inhabit and use it to his *ali'i ai moku* (subordinate chiefs). On O'ahu and the island of Hawai'i, for example, there were six *moku*, and the island of Ni'ihau had only five.

These subordinate chiefs then divided their districts into various subdistricts called *ahupua'a* of various sizes and shapes (see Figure 3.1). The typical *ahupua'a* was in the shape of a pie slice with its point at the top of a central mountain peak and its wider edge at the seashore. This configuration would

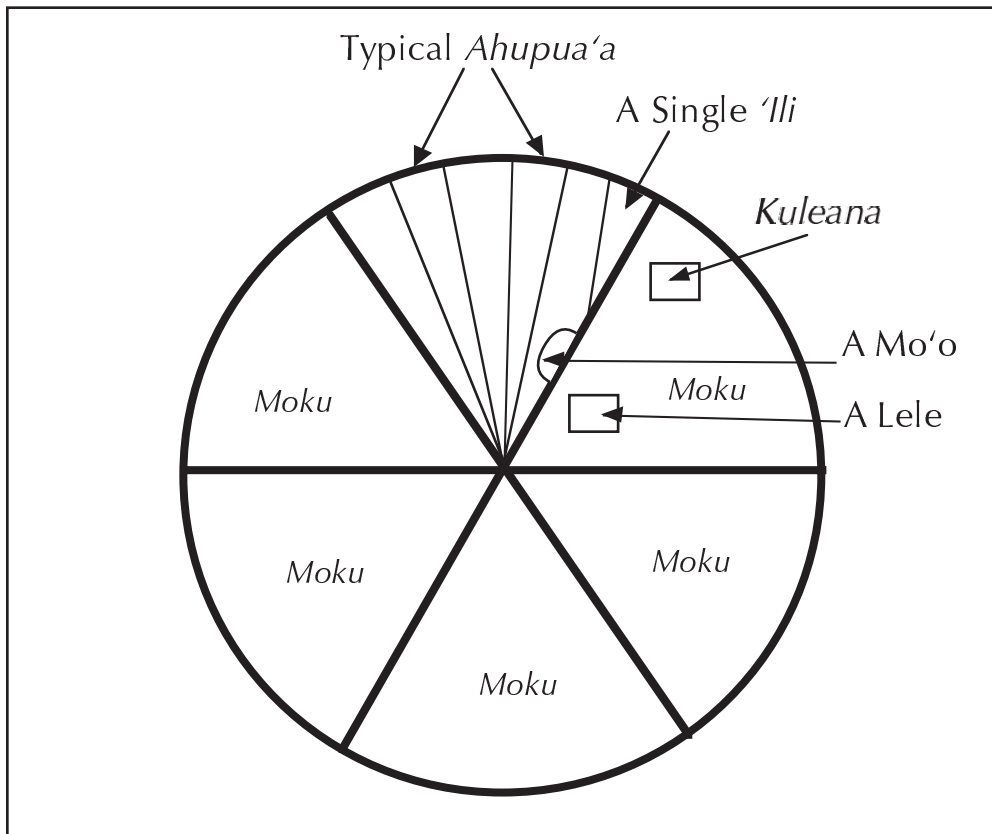


Figure 3.1: Drawing illustrating the Hawaiian Division of an Island (mokopuni) into Districts (moku) and then into Subdistricts (ahupua'a).

allow all people living in the *ahupua'a* access to the mountains for timber and the various plants there, a flat coastal plain for agriculture and living, and the adjacent ocean for fishing. Boundaries were well defined by natural topography or well-placed stones, and no one from one *ahupua'a* could cross into another to collect food or to fish, but they were free to permanently move from one to another. A ruler over an *ahupua'a* was called a *konohiki*, and he could be replaced by the *ari'i nui* if he did not perform his duties properly.

In some cases, families lived on portions of land within an *ahupua'a* that were not contiguous to each other. In that case, the primary residence was called a *kuleana* (primary residence) and the secondary residence a *lele*. In other instances, a family could live in an *'ili*, which reached to the shore line but did not extend to the mountain top, or another family could live inland on a *mo'o* and

not have direct access to the ocean. Commoners tilled the land and fished for four days, and on the fifth, they worked for the *konohiki* for their “rent.” Other “rent” demands were made by the ruling class at different times throughout the year. When Europeans first visited the islands, they detected a similarity between the economic and social system in Hawai‘i and that of medieval Europe, with its manor lords and serfs. The Hawaiian commoners, however, were free to move between *ahupua‘a*, but medieval serfs could not move from one manor to another. If the *konohiki* was oppressive, for example, Hawaiians could simply move across *ahupua‘a* boundaries to another district. An *ali‘i nui* might become suspicious, however, if there was a sudden drop in population numbers in a particular *ahupua‘a* and an increase in its neighboring one. An investigation might cause the *ali‘i nui* to replace his *konohiki*.

Polynesians held a special reverence for their lands. They also believed that stones from these lands held supernatural powers. There is an old Hawaiian saying “*He ole ka pōhaku a he make ka pōhaku*” (There is life in the stones and death in the stones). “Life in the stones” refers to the fact that stones were used for cooking in the underground ovens, and “death in the stones” refers to the fact that their warriors used stones to kill their enemies. Stones could also be the habitat of wandering spirits that did not make it to the underworld after death. Some stones, therefore, were to be feared as homes of horrific ghosts. Gods could also reveal themselves by occupying certain stones during religious ceremonies, and for this reason, stone god images wrapped in tapa and brightly colored feathers were placed on the altars during sacred ceremonies in the open-air temples.

Rocks or stones also were characterized by sex. A solid, phallus-looking stone, of course, was male, and a porous, loaf-shaped stone was female. It was also believed that rocks could grow and eventually reproduce. Some families had “pet” rocks that they watered frequently because they felt they were “alive” and if they tended to them, the family would be blessed. Certain large stones standing alone on a particular stretch of land might be worshiped as fertility gods or goddesses, and well into the twentieth century, Hawaiians used to visit the Wahiawā healing stones on O‘ahu thinking that they held special healing powers for women and young children. Famous, too, are the stories today regarding tourists who carry off lava stones from the Big Island of Hawai‘i. They later send them back through the mail to Hawai‘i, because the stones had brought them bad luck. Stories of mysterious stones similar to these are found in almost all of the other Polynesian islands scattered throughout the Pacific.

**See also** Chiefly Class; Ghosts; God Images; Mana; Pele (Pere); Plants (Food); Temples

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**LAU-KA-ʻIEʻIE**

Cultural Group: Hawaiʻi

The mythological romance of the goddess Lau-ka-ʻieʻie (Leaf of the trailing pandanus) was one of many that explained to the ancient Hawaiians the origins of the beautiful plants and blossoms they found in the islands. The story takes place in the picturesque and sacred Waipiʻo Valley, located near the northern tip of the island of Hawaiʻi. The valley was the ancient home of the gods and the first Polynesian immigrants to the islands, and many of the ancient legends tell of its sharp cliffs and precipices, its many winds, waterfalls, and clouds.

The legend of Lau-ka-ʻieʻie is more than a romance, however; it relates a story of the deep and abiding love between brothers and sisters, “the children of the valley,” and of their desires to help each attain their dreams. Lau-ka-ʻieʻie and her two brothers, Hiʻilawe (god of waterfalls) and Makani-kau (god of winds), were children of the steep precipices of the Waipiʻo Valley, but Lau-ka-ʻieʻie was reared by her aunt (Pōkini) and uncle (Kau-kini) (a Hawaiian custom) who are childless, and Makani-kau was reared by the beautiful goddess Hina-ʻulu-ʻōhiʻa. Lau-ka-ʻieʻie grew into a beautiful young woman, surrounded by her most trusted friends—Lau-ka-pali (Leaf of the precipice), Leaf of the Morning Glory, Pupu-kani-ʻoi (the singing land shell), and Pupu-hina-hina-ʻula (Shell beautiful with rainbow colors). She spent her days singing and playing with them, and during the night they serenaded her with their singing and chanting. They all loved one another.

One night, Lau-ka-ʻieʻie dreamed of a handsome young chief who lived on the island of Kauaʻi and desired him to be her husband (reminiscent of the Pele legend). All of her friends volunteered to set out on the perilous journey to find the young chief, but it was Pupu-kani-ʻoi who was chosen to go. Pupu-kani-ʻoi summoned her other leaf and shell friends to go with her, and she called upon her wind brother Makani-kau to accompany and protect them. They journeyed all around the islands of Hawaiʻi and Oʻahu, but they could not find anyone who met Lau-ka-ʻieʻie’s description of the man in her dreams. Pupu-kani-ʻoi, however, met a young chief, with whom she fell in love, and lingered on Oʻahu while Makani-kau and the rest of the search party continued to Kauaʻi.

Shortly thereafter, Makani-kau was confronted by two dragon ladies who tried to thwart his search, but he simply left them behind in his wind. Crossing the channel between O'ahu and Kaua'i, Makani-kau rescued a canoe full of people who were being threatened by a monstrous shark. He turned the shark away and dashed him upon the shore, where the shark became the shark stone of Hā'ena, Kaua'i. On Kaua'i, Makani-kau finally met the object of his sister's dreams—Kawelona, the first-born son of the high chief of Kaua'i—gently being carried on the backs of his guardian birds over the hills and valleys of the island. Revealing his spiritual power (mana) in his true form, Makani-kau informed Kawelona of his mission, whereupon Kawelona revealed that he, too, had a dream in which he met the beautiful Lau-ka-'ie'ie, and that his parents were willing to let him go find her.

Makani-kau led him to the shore, where he summoned up his friends, the cloud gods, who sent a long, white cloud-boat to ferry Kawelona across to Hawai'i. The gentle winds and the beautiful birds all accompanied the group, and as they passed one island after another, they stopped and gathered whatever friends wanted to come and participate in the wedding. Stopping at O'ahu, they picked up Pupu-kani-'oi and her new husband and three female spirits. The boats sped across the sea, stopping for a time on the small island of Kaho'olawe, where the travelers were entertained at a great feast by the shark god Ka-moho-ali'i and his fellow sharks.

From here, they made their way swiftly to Hawai'i, where Lau-ka-'ie'ie was anxiously waiting. The party again was sidetracked, this time by the goddess Hina, who took them to the top of Mauna Kea (the highest mountain in Hawai'i), but finally they made their way to Waipi'o. There, they summoned all of their friends (even the sharks from Kaho'olawe) to the wedding. Hundreds of gods and goddess appeared in the form of clouds, winds, flowers, vines, fish, and sharks. Makani-kau set seashells upon the tips of all the precipices of Waipi'o, and then he gently blew through them to create a beautiful melody that was heard throughout the entire valley. When the marriage ceremony ended, all returned to their respective homes, and the young couple settled down. Makani-kau, however, made one more journey. He swept over to Kaua'i again and returned with Kawelona's parents, who happily lived with their son and daughter-in-law on the Big Island.

Years passed and Lau-ka-'ie'ie's family grew old. Her brother Hi'ilawe became ill and died. She removed his *malo* and flowered leis and buried them on the side of the mountains, where they turned into trees and clinging vines. Makani-kau buried his brother's body near the top of the highest cliffs, where it turned into a stone (some say you can still see it today). The goddess Hina captured her adopted son's spirit and turned it into the mists of Waipi'o so that



*Illustration 3.30: The beautiful Hawaiian 'ie'ie vine (Freycinetia arborea) with its vivid red flowers is said to have grown out of the body of the goddess Lau-ka-'ie'ie after her death and burial in Waipi'o Valley on the island of Hawai'i. (U.S. Geological Survey)*

Hi'ilawe could always look into the eyes of his people (his last wish). Eventually, Hina, too, grew old, and when she died, she turned into the beautiful and sacred 'ōhi'a lehua tree (*Metrosideros collina*), which still grows on the sides of the volcanoes on the Big Island (see Illustration 3.28 in the entry for "Hina" for a photo of the lehua blossoms). When it came time for Lau-ka-'ie'ie to die, her faithful brother Makani-kau watched over her. After her death, he carried her body into the hills of Waipi'o and buried her near the goddess Hina. Just like Hina, Lau-ka-'ie'ie, too, turned into a wooded plant, the fiery 'ie'ie (*Freycinetia arborea*) vine, which clings and gracefully twines around tall

trees in the forests with its green leaves and its blazing red flowers (see Illustration 3.30).

**See also** Chiefly Class; Dance; Ghosts; Hina; Mana; Pele (Pere); Plants (Food); Sharks; Underworld

**Suggested Reading:**

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## LONO

Cultural Group: Hawai'i

The god Lono is considered one of the three major gods of ancient Hawai'i. Creation chants say that the gods Kāne, Kū, and Lono came out of the night (*pō*) and created three heavens, one for each of them, with Lono's being the lowest and nearest the earth. Then the three gods created the earth, all its abundant life, and then the first human beings. Lono's paramount importance to Hawaiian mythology is undeniable.

His full name is Lono-nui-noho-i-ka-wai (Great Lono Dwelling in the Water), for he is associated with the heavenly manifestations of clouds, storms, rain, thunder, and all other similar displays, such as earthquakes and so forth. He is also a god of fertility, and *heiau* (temples) were erected to him in which the

priests prayed for rain and an abundance of crops. Hawai'i's rainy season (October to February) was dedicated to him, and during the rainy season, a festival called the *makahiki* was organized by the ruling chiefs and priests. The *makahiki* celebrations began when the chief's representatives appeared in the local district carrying Lono's symbol (the *akua loa*)—a tall staff about 10 feet in height with a crosspiece about 16 feet, tied near the top of the staff, on which hung decorations of feathers, ferns, and huge billowing *kapa* (bark cloth). The *makahiki* was a time of celebration for the annual harvest, and the commoners brought their tribute or "taxes" to the chief's representatives as their contribution for the upkeep of the nobility (*ali'i*) and priests. Their contributions consisted of all kinds of vegetables, wild animals, dried fish, fine *kapa* and mats, and other valuable property. Afterwards, mock battles, wrestling matches, and other popular celebrations were conducted until Lono's symbol was carried out of the district, and then the new year was said to have begun.

Several legends suggest how the *makahiki* had its first beginnings. They say that once Lono decided to take a wife, he sent two of his brothers to earth to find a suitable bride. They found her—the beautiful Ka-iki-lani—living in Waipi'o Valley on the Big Island of Hawai'i. The brothers returned and announced their "find" to Lono, who descended from heaven on a rainbow and presented himself before Ka-iki-lani. They were married, and they lived happily together, spending much of their time in their favorite sport of surfing. Eventually, however, Lono suspected his lovely wife of infidelity and in anger beat her to death. Before she died, however, she maintained her innocence and expressed her true love for her husband. Finally realizing his error, Lono repented of his dastardly deed and in her honor instituted the original *makahiki* celebrations. He traveled around the island challenging any opponent in wrestling matches, and then eventually he decided to leave the island. While he built an enormous outrigger canoe, the Hawaiians collected a bounty of food and supplies to aid him on his journey. As he sailed away, he promised that one day he would return, not in a canoe, but on an island covered with coconut trees and swarming with an abundance of wildlife.

In 1778, by happenstance, the British explorer Captain James Cook sailed into Hawaiian waters during the *makahiki* festivities on the Big Island. He was the first white foreigner the Hawaiians had ever seen. As Cook's ship sailed into Kealakekua Bay, the Hawaiians mistook his huge ship with its billowing sails for the mysterious island spoken of anciently by Lono, and they believed Lono had returned. The Hawaiians initially believed Captain Cook was the god Lono, and in due respect, the priests of the island revered him in a sacred ceremony in one of their *heiau* (temples). Later, of course, on 14 February 1779, Captain Cook eventually met his death at Kealakekua Bay during a skirmish between the



British and the Hawaiians. During Cook's stay in the islands, the Hawaiians had come to realize that Cook and his men were mere mortals and not the great god they had so anticipated.

*See also* Arioi Society; Chiefly Class; Land; *Kumulipo*; Temples

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## MAKEMAKE

Cultural Group: Easter Island

Anciently, Makemake ("mah-kay-mah-kay") was the supreme god of Easter Island (Rapanui), and yet his name is hardly spoken without mentioning his companion, the god Haua. Both of these names are not found elsewhere in Polynesia, and unlike the legends of the other Polynesian islands, Easter Island mythologies hardly mention the great gods Tāne, Tangaloa, Kū, Rongo, and heroes Māui, Tinirau, and Rata, who are found in most of the mythologies elsewhere.

One short legend tells of the origin of Makemake. Once upon a time, a human skull rested upon the huge *ahu* (platform for island statues) at Tongariki (southeast coast of the island), and a certain priestess was given the task of being its guardian. One day, a huge wave came and washed the skull out to sea. In desperation, the priestess dove into the water and rescued the skull, but in doing so she was carried out to a small island where she found rest. While there, the god Haua appeared before her and told her that the skull she rescued was none other than the great god Makemake and that the priestess had to return to the island and teach the people to offer up sacrifices and prayers both to him and to Makemake. She returned to Rapanui and instructed the people as she had been told.

Meanwhile, Haua and Makemake decided to chase all of the sea birds from the island, because the humans were eating their eggs. The gods chased them from one place to another, until the birds finally settled on a small islet called Motu-nui off the southwest tip (Orongo) of the island, where no humans lived. To commemorate the event, the Rapanui initiated a yearly ceremony, called in modern terms the "Birdman Cult of Easter Island." Each spring, the young men swam to the island, and the first one back with the first egg of the season was designated the winner. That young man's chief would then become the *tangata-manu* (birdman) for the coming year, a position that insured various material privileges as well as religious and social prestige. The hand-carved petroglyphs

on the rocks at Orongo apparently depict what the islanders believed Makemake looked like. The figure combines the body of a man with the head and feet of a frigate bird, a bird sacred to the Rapanui nobility. (See Illustration 3.2 in the entry “Birdman Cult.”)

**See also** Birdman Cult; God Images; Hotu Matua; Migrations; *Moai*, Easter Island

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## MANA

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Definition of the Polynesian word “mana” is complex and elusive, and it generally requires more than a few words to describe it adequately. As a word now accepted in the English language, it means “the power of the elemental forces of nature embodied in an object or person.” Other synonyms could be suggested, such as “supernatural or divine power, might, authority, influence, prestige, reputation, and charisma.” Although it might be hard to describe precisely, most Polynesians can recognize persons who possess a great deal of mana. It might be a prestigious leader, who is well respected in his or her community; it might be a grandfather or grandmother whose life exemplifies the finest qualities one can imagine; or, it might be an artist or craftsman whose exquisite work and whose personality set him or her apart from all the others. Once when asked whom I regarded as a Pacific personality who possessed great mana, I responded without hesitation “The king of Tonga and Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, the prime minister of Fiji.” Other names, of course, came to mind immediately thereafter.

Anciently, mana emanated from the gods who possessed it to a superlative degree. A Polynesian legend suggests that when the god Tāne threw his lightning bolt and killed Ātea (space), Ātea’s mana did not die with him but passed down to his earthly descendants, the high chiefs and nobility of Polynesia. One way humans can obtain mana, therefore, is through genealogy or birthright. Chiefs, especially those in the highly structured societies of Tonga, Tahiti, and Hawai’i, were imbued with a kind of supernatural aura or power inherited from their father. The more mana that the father possessed upon his death, the more that could be transmitted to his eldest son. Junior sons as well as daughters could inherit this power, but to a lesser degree, and marriages were frequently arranged between children of high-ranking families—even between brothers and sisters—in order to preserve the family’s unique mana.

Another way of receiving mana was to acquire it during one’s lifetime. A young priest acquired ritual mana through exposure or contact with the

supernatural during his training, and as he grew in wisdom and stature, his mana increased exponentially. A craftsman obtained mana as his expertise and skills increased, and as a result, he became well respected in the community. As a brave warrior succeeded in victory after victory over the tribe's enemy, his reputation (mana) rose accordingly. But acquired mana is volatile. A priest who forgets the proper chants, a craftsman whose skill is lost because of old age or blindness, or a warrior whose victories have turned to defeats may all lose a portion or all of their mana. The common explanation for this loss of mana is that the gods have become displeased and have relinquished this person's mana; or perhaps, an evil entity has gained power over the individual. If the latter is the case, the person may have to resort to religious ceremonies and priestly advice to help alleviate his problem.

Even those born with the potential of great mana may not rise to the expectations of society. The way rulers conduct their lives and carry out their duties determine the actual mana gained during their lifetime. Weak rulers or perhaps those that rule despotically might find themselves without subjects or perhaps the object of a revolution to depose them.

**See also** Chiefly Class; Genealogies; Priests; *Tapu*

**Suggested Reading:**

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## MARRIAGE

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

If marriage is defined as entering into a mutual, personal relationship, with some degree of public acceptance, with a member of the opposite sex for a given period of time in exchange for services (including sex) and objects, then it is safe to say that most Polynesians have entered into marriage at least once, or more often, during their lifetime. That is not to say, however, that an actual public ceremony took place, because in most cases, marriages among commoners simply meant “moving in with one another.” On some occasions, however, the families of the new couple hosted a large feast, where gifts between the two families were exchanged. Polynesians' approval of sex before marriage, for at least the commoners, created no biological urge to drive young people to marry at an early age, but the traditional division of labor between adult males and females led most young people to enter into such unions once they had entered puberty. Customarily, girls married younger than boys, but boys married later because they were supposed to have proved their manhood or prowess before marriage.

The chiefly class, on the other hand, took marriage unions more seriously, especially in the highly structured societies of Tahiti, Hawai'i, Tonga, Sāmoa, New Zealand, and the Marquesas Islands. In these cases, marriages were formal alliances between ruling families, and in the Marquesas, for example, chiefly children were often betrothed even before they were born. Various *tapus* (taboos) were established to regulate such unions. Marriages between individuals in the same tribe were favored in order to prevent a possible war between tribes should the husband have serious domestic problems with a wife of another tribe. But, of course, chiefly marriages between different tribes were often arranged to cement ties of friendship and peace between the two. *Tapus* prohibited marriages between closely related individuals. Marriages between cousins were not permitted except by the very high chiefs (the *ari'inui*), where, in Hawai'i, for example, the royal heir would often marry his sister in order to preserve the divine character of their pedigree. In these cases, such intermarriage was encouraged, accepted, and any male heir reared as if he were divine.

An aristocratic daughter was not permitted the sexual freedom allowed by daughters of the lower classes, and she was often carefully guarded until her wedding day. She had little say in the choice of her husband, a practice not found among the lower classes, where in many cases, the bride could actually initiate the relationship. Usually, chiefly marriages consisted of merely feasting and entertaining for several hours or even a day, after which the new couple set up house, but "royal" marriages often became elaborate social and religious ceremonies that took several days. Such marriages were witnessed by some of the early navigators and missionaries to the islands; one witnessed by the Reverend William Ellis sometime between 1817 and 1823, for example, was described as follows (Ellis 1829, II:568–570).

Weeks before the intended wedding, the families of the bride and groom gathered together great quantities of food, tapa cloth, fine mats, and colorful bird feathers. The day before the ceremony, a group of *ariori* (see the "Ariori Society" entry earlier in this chapter) was called in to entertain the crowd of well-wishers with their exuberant singing, dances, and pantomime. The following morning, the groom's family set out to the bride's home to accompany her and her family back to the groom's home. Accompanying her, of course, were all the splendid provisions that had been collected over the past several weeks. When the bride arrived at the groom's house, the goods and gifts were piled on sections of tapa cloth that had been laid out for the affair. The groom's provisions were piled up as well, and it is said that the generous gifts of both had to equal each other or else one family would be shamed. The couple sat upon freshly made mats and tapa cloth while the gift exchange began. Food was prepared, and feasting and entertaining continued throughout the day.

That night, the bride and her family stayed in the houses provided by the groom.

On the following day, the bride and groom were dressed in white tapa cloth and led to the open-air temple, the *marae*, where a priest, dedicated to the god 'Oro, officiated in the religious ceremony. The bride and groom took up their positions approximately six yards apart. The priest then asked each, "Will you not cast away your spouse?" After negative answers from each, he addressed them: "Happy will it be, if thus with ye two." Often genealogies of both bride and groom were recited, and then prayers offered for the happiness of the new couple. The bride's parents then spread a large white tapa cloth on the ground for the couple to sit on, and the ancestral bones and skulls of both families were brought out from hiding and openly revealed. The couple then clasped hands, and the bride's family took a piece of sugarcane wrapped in a sacred branch of the *miro* tree (*Thespesia populine*), touched the head of the groom, and then laid it down between them. The groom's family did the same to the bride. This act presumably symbolized the equality that now existed between the two families. Customarily, relatives of both sides of the family punctured their faces or body with sharp instruments to cause blood to flow and drop upon the marriage cloth.

Another white tapa cloth was brought out and thrown over the couple for a few minutes (some say that the young couple had their first sexual union at that time), and then it was withdrawn. The blood-stained marriage cloth was ripped into two sections, each folded around the other emblems of marriage (the sugarcane and *miro* branch), and buried near the *marae* by each side of the family. After these religious ceremonies were complete, the bridal party returned to the bride's home, where additional merriment, toasting, and feasting might last several days, depending, of course, upon the rank and wealth of the families.

Plural marriages (polygamy) among the chiefly class were common, and there are several instances where a wife had more than one husband, but that was very infrequent. Divorce for both husband and wife was simple. Either could announce that they were leaving, gather their belongings, and merely leave. They were both free to enter into any subsequent relationship they wanted, and there was no social stigma attached to such separations.

**See also** Ceremonies, Religious; Chiefly Class; Genealogies; Mana; Sex and Sexuality; Temples

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## MĀUI

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Māui (correctly pronounced “Mah-oo-ee,” but more popularly pronounced “Mau-wee”) is one of the most popular demigods in all of Polynesia, and legends of his superhuman exploits are found in almost every island group. Modern writers refer to him as the “Hercules of Polynesian mythology” or “the South Seas Superman” because of his marvelous and superhuman achievements. Children love to hear the stories of Māui who, as a little boy, played a thousand tricks on his companions; and almost everyone admires his heroism, altruism, and brash accomplishments set among the family of gods and goddesses. His more popular escapades include separating the earth and sky, snaring the sun to lengthen out the day, discovering the secret of fire making, fishing up the islands of the sea, battling against monsters and demons, and ultimately, but unsuccessfully, attempting to find immortality for humans.

The fullest and most complex story of Māui comes from New Zealand. There, Māui was the son of Ataranga and her husband Makeatutara, but when he was prematurely born, his mother threw the fetus into the sea with a lock of her own hair. Water spirits and jellyfish rescued the young boy and then transported him to his divine ancestress Tama-nui-te-rangi, who nurtured him until he became a teenager. Then Māui set out to find his own family—his mother, his four brothers (all named Māui) and his sister, Hina. Ataranga was overjoyed at his return, but his brothers were more apprehensive about the attention his mother showered upon the new arrival. It was only after Māui revealed his supernatural powers by turning himself into different kinds of birds that his brothers finally accepted him.

All went well for a while, but Māui soon became curious when he discovered that every day his mother left them at dawn and returned only at dusk. Māui decided to play a trick on his mother to find out exactly where she went. That night, he plugged up the openings in their house so that no light could enter and awake his mother. The next morning, Ataranga awakened extremely late, rushed around to find her clothes, and then dashed out of the house. Māui turned himself into a pigeon and followed her through a hole to the underground world, where he was united with both his mother and father. His father performed the necessary sacred purification rites upon his son, but they were faulted. He forgot to mention a particular god in the incantation, and thus the ceremony was tainted. Similar to Achilles in Greek mythology, Māui received supernatural powers, but had one mortal fault—he could experience death.

Soon thereafter, Māui returned to the upper world, informed his brothers of what occurred while he was gone, and then began his famous exploits. First, Māui visited his old, cannibalistic grandmother and gained possession of her

magic jawbone, which he used in his first great exploit—the snaring and slowing down of the sun. Māui convinced his brothers that the sun traveled too swiftly through the heavens. (In the Hawaiian myth, Māui slowed the sun so that his mother, Hina, could have enough time during the day to dry her newly made tapa cloths.) Māui first taught his brothers the art of rope making, and after considerable work, they constructed a huge snare in which to catch the sun. After all preparations were made, the brothers set out toward the eastern horizon and set the snare for the following day. Sure enough, as the sun rose through the snare, the brothers strongly yanked on it as Māui used the magical jawbone to beat the sun until he could no longer speed along his regular path.

His second major exploit was the fishing up of the islands of the sea. Each day Māui's brothers went fishing, but they always refused to take Māui with them because they were afraid of his magical tricks. One day, however, Māui hid in their canoe and suddenly revealed himself when they were far out to sea. Māui drew out his fishhook made from the magical jawbone of his grandmother, baited it with some blood from his nose, and then lowered it deep down into the ocean. The hook snared Great Tonga, grandson of the ocean god Tangaroa, and Māui pulled the "great fish" up into the boat. After they reached shore, he instructed his brothers to guard the fish while he went and made the appropriate offerings to the gods. In the meantime, his brothers became ravenous and began to cut up the fish to eat. The fish, however, jumped ashore and miraculously turned itself into land that became the islands of New Zealand. The islands would have been flat and smooth rather than jagged with mountain ranges and valleys if Māui's brothers had left the fish alone.

Māui next discovered the secret of making fire. Since the beginning of time, humans had obtained fire directly from the fire goddess, Mahuika, and had kept their campfires burning so that they would not have to go to the underworld and encounter Mahuika again. Believing he could solve this problem, Māui extinguished all the campfires that night and then the next morning ordered his servants to build a fire. They discovered the fires were out, and no one dared offer to go to the underworld to face the formidable fire goddess. Māui, however, volunteered and gained permission from his parents to go. Underground, he met Mahuika, who gave him one of her fingernails as a spark of fire. (Her fingernails are actually her five children, whom she had been guarding.) Not satisfied with just a "spark," Māui tricked her into parting with all ten of her fingernails and nine of her toenails. When Māui demanded the last, she angrily pulled it out and dashed it to the ground, whereupon the whole country became engulfed in flames. Māui barely saved himself by turning into a soaring eagle and flying away. He then called upon the gods, who sent a flood of water to extinguish all the flames. Seeing the possible total loss of fire, Mahuika sent the last remain-



ing sparks of the fire into the nearby trees. From that day forward, humans have found that they can make fire themselves by rubbing two sticks together. When Māui returned home, his parents scolded him for undertaking such dangerous tricks—the humiliation of the sun god and the destruction of the fire goddess’s powers. They warned him that if he did not mend his ways, he might not be so fortunate the next time.

Māui’s next trick, that of turning his brother-in-law into a dog, finally caused his expulsion from the upper world back to the underworld of his father and mother. Māui had a beautiful young sister named Hina, whose husband, Irawaru, went fishing with Māui. When Irawaru pulled in far more fish than Māui, Māui became jealous and the two had heated arguments. On their journey home, Māui turned his brother-in-law into a dog. When he returned home, Māui told his sister that Irawaru was waiting for her down on the beach. When Hina found that her husband had been turned into a dog, she was distraught and wept bitterly. In rage, she gathered up her magical girdle and cried:

“I weep, I call to the steep billows of the sea,  
And to him, the great, the ocean god;  
To monsters, all now hidden,  
To come and bury me,  
Who now am wrapped in mourning.  
Let the waves wear their mourning, too,  
And sleep as sleeps the dead.”

(From an ancient Māori chant of New Zealand. Westervelt 1910, 105)

She then threw herself into the raging ocean. Some myths say she perished, but others tell of her rescue and of her famous adventures.

Māui’s father reproached him for his malicious deeds and warned him that his good luck could not last forever. He told Māui of the supernatural power of Hine-nui-te-po (Great Hine of the Underworld), the goddess of death, whose power even Māui cannot conquer. Arrogantly, Māui boasted of his many super-human accomplishments and then defiantly asked his father where he could find this great lady. As soon as his father told him, Māui set out to find her. First, he gathered up some companions—a flock of birds whom he had befriended—and as they approached the place where the horizon meets the sky, they found the sleeping maiden. Māui told his friends that in order to slay her, he had to enter her body between her thighs and come out her mouth, claiming that should he do so, he would achieve immortality not only for himself but for all humanity. The birds were terrified, but Māui warned them not to make a chirp, otherwise, they would awaken the goddess, and he would be killed. The little birds watched as Māui began his task. Just as Māui’s legs were about to disappear between

Hine's thighs, the little Water Wagtail could no longer contain himself and laughed out loud. As expected, the Great Hine awoke, saw what was happening, and crushed Māui to death. Human immortality thus died with the magnanimous Māui. A little-known Māori legend sheds further light on Māui's death. It claims that Hine-nui-te-po was actually the sister of the fire goddess, Mahuika, whose children Māui destroyed in learning how to make fire, and Mahuika slew Māui in revenge for the death of her sister's children.

Nowhere can you go in Polynesia without encountering the tricks and superhuman exploits of the demigod Māui. Details may vary from one island to another, but everyone agrees that the stories of Māui are the most familiar and beloved of all the mythological stories throughout Polynesia.

*See also* Death; Ha'amonga-a-Māui; Hina; Sun God; Underworld

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## **MENEHUNE**

Cultural Group: Hawai'i

Of all the mythological stories of old Hawai'i, none have survived and been perpetuated as much as the popular stories of the little people—the *menehune*. There is hardly an elementary-school student who has not heard of the remarkable tales of these unusual-looking dwarfs who only appear at night and who undertake remarkable construction projects. Not too long ago, even an adult—an elementary-school teacher on Kaua'i—dismissed her students so that they could carry on a serious search for one of these small creatures, who she believed had been lurking around her classroom. Of course, the whole project was given up when the principal appeared and put an immediate stop to the activity. The myth has also been perpetuated at the university level; the mascot of the football team of the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa campus, for example, used to be a cartoon figure of a *menehune*, an appropriate symbol, since these little people are said to have lived up in Mānoa Valley. Tourists to the islands can pick up a wide assortment of colorful trinkets—from cartoon coloring books to drinking

mugs—that carry replicas of these jolly-looking Hawaiian dwarfs on them. They then carry the trinkets back to their hometowns, where the pictures and stories of the *menehune* are spread even further outside the Hawaiian culture.

The legends of these mythical creatures date far back into the distant past; in fact, the *menehune* are believed to have been the first inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands. When the first Polynesians arrived on those shores, they found monumental structures—fish ponds, *heiau* (temples), and dams—all presumably built by the little *menehune*, who lived in caves up in the valleys of all the islands. *Menehune* men were attracted to the newly arrived Hawaiian women, and intermarriage frequently occurred, always to the disapproval of the *menehune* chiefs. Legends also tell of the mass migration of the *menehune* from the islands because of this social intercourse, and an examination of current Hawaiian genealogies will often reveal several *menehune* names on pedigree charts. The belief in these little people permeated Hawaiian culture so much that a census taker early in the nineteenth century unabashedly recorded the names of sixty-five of these *menehune*, who supposedly were living up in the valleys of Kauaʻi.

In modern times, these little people are normally invisible to anyone other than their own kind, but sometimes they are reported as having been unexpectedly seen by island residents. Their height, they say, ranges from two to three feet tall (although one little girl reported seeing one that was only six inches high), and they are strong and muscular with long hair and eyebrows. Their simple diet consists of starchy puddings, fruit, berries, and taro leaves, and it is reported you can get them to work all night for you for one shrimp and a serving of poi. They play and work equally hard; they love playing old Hawaiian games—top spinning, shooting arrows, foot races, sled races, and diving off cliffs—and they generally complete major construction jobs, such as fence walls, canoes, and temples, within a single night because of their superior strength. They often live on a mystical island called Kuaihelani, which floats in the heavens and descends at night in order for the little people to climb aboard or to disembark to carry out their various tasks. They are generally said to be serious-looking and not very handsome, but they are almost always friendly and jolly little pixies, unless they are crossed. Then they can be downright nasty and malicious.

One of the most remarkable structures attributed to the *menehune* is the Menehune Ditch (sometimes called Ola's Water Lead) on the island of Kauaʻi, a ditch that brings water from Waimea River to the taro patches on the other side of the mountain, some six miles away. The remarkable stonework used in its construction is unique and can only be found in one other place in Polynesia—the Marquesas Islands, approximately two thousand miles south of Hawaiʻi. One legend maintains that chief Ola could not get his own men to complete a stone wall around a fish pond, so Pi, one of Ola's less willing workmen, bribed the

*menehune* to complete the work for him in exchange for some little wrapped packages of fish and poi—all in one night. Ola handsomely rewarded Pi for his work and convinced him to get the *menehune* to work for him again the next night. Pi summoned his *menehune* relatives, and all night long they passed stones between each other to the site in order to complete the dam and the lengthy ditch. The various narratives of the story may differ on particular names and events, but all maintain that the *menehune* did the construction.

As time passes and the stories of ancient sites and ruins become forgotten, legends of the little people grow exponentially. In the past century, for example, villagers on Kaua'i once knew the exact story of how their ancestors had worked to construct a particular site for their chief. Their ancestors' names were well known and revered. Within ten years and as the older generation passed away, however, the details regarding the original story were forgotten, and the younger generation began to attribute the remarkable work to the *menehune* rather than to their own ancestors. Considering reports such as this, then, one can assume that legends of the little people will never dwindle either in popularity or in number.

**See also** Elves and Fairies

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## METEOROLOGICAL ELEMENTS

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

The various meteorological forces in this world—clouds, winds, rain, thunder and lightning, and rainbows—are commonly encountered by Polynesians on nearly a daily basis. Tropical island weather patterns are far different than those found on continents. One part of the island, for example, may be having torrential rains, while another experiences beautiful blue skies. The windward sides of the islands may be lush with tropical vegetation, while the leeward sides are dry and better adapted at growing cactus. Low clouds are ever swirling around the tops of the mountains, and on occasion the beaches are dry and sunny, while rain falls heavily on the mountainsides, usually accompanied by a beautiful rainbow or even a double rainbow. These powerful forces of weather always seem closer and more personal to islanders than to anyone else in the world, and it is not surprising, therefore, that many variant Polynesian myths and legends tell about them.

## THE WINDS

The New Zealand Māori give prime importance to their wind god, Tāwhiri-mātea, who played a major role in the early creation of the universe. When the council of powerful gods first discussed the physical separation of their parents, Rangi (Sky Father) and Papa (Earth Mother), it was only Tāwhiri-mātea who opposed such a dastardly act. After the god Tāne successfully separated them, Tāwhiri-mātea immediately declared war on his brothers. He dispatched all of his progeny to help him. He sent forth “fierce squalls, whirlwinds, dense clouds, massy clouds, dark clouds, gloomy thick clouds, fierce clouds, clouds that precede hurricanes, clouds of fiery black, clouds reflecting glowing red light . . . clouds of thunder storms, and clouds hurriedly flying” (Grey 1855, 7). He snapped off gigantic trees, dashed them to earth, and rendered them into atoms. He then swooped down upon the seas and unleashed his wrath upon the ocean. It seemed that no one could resist his anger, but in the end it was his brother Tū who finally won the day and brought tranquility to the heavens once again. When Rangi and Papa finally became separated, Tāwhiri-mātea’s four winds—north, east, south, and west—were called upon to help prop up the sky and hold it aloft. Māori priests of old, we are told, could command the winds, and oftentimes a traveler would seek out a *tohunga* who used his charms to calm the inclement weather for them.

## THE CLOUDS

The Māori also claim that it was Tāne who first created the clouds. After the separation of Rangi and Papa and seeing that they were bare and naked, Tāne spread a *kura* (red) garment over them to conceal their nakedness. He then pushed the *kura* back and adorned his parents with heavenly stars for decoration and turned the *kura* into clouds to conceal them from time to time. On the island of Bora Bora, legends say that clouds were formed by the great god Ta’aroa during the first creation. As he climbed out of his primordial shell, Ta’aroa saw that nothing existed, whereupon, he took various parts of his own body and created the heavens and earth. From his ribs, he created the mountain ranges, and from his vitals, he created the low-lying clouds. A similar tale comes from the neighboring islands of Mo’orea and Tahiti, where Rū, the artisan for Ta’aroa, created the first clouds. The chants say that as Rū pushed up the sky above the mountains on Bora Bora and Rā’iatea, he became badly ruptured and his intestines fell out and settled as clouds along the horizon of the two islands. But the injured Rū could no longer help in the creation. It was only through the heroic efforts of the demigod Māui and eventually the great god Tāne that the sky was raised to its fullest height. On Mangaia, Hina (the goddess in the moon) is responsible for the making of clouds. Her job is to make tapa, and as she beats

it, she frequently shakes the cloth out vigorously in the air. The fragments from her beaten tapa are turned into the white, fluffy clouds that float over the islands and ocean.

#### RAINBOWS

Rainbows are a favorite mythological subject worldwide because of their beauty and mystical appearance. In ancient Polynesia, however, very few stories were told of the rainbow, although rainbows were recognized to be closely connected to the ruling chiefs and the gods and goddesses. In Hawai'i, they were the signs of the high chiefs and were reportedly good omens, but elsewhere they were most closely related to the gods and goddesses who would sometimes appear to humans in the form of a rainbow. The Mंगाians say that the goddess Hina is linked to several rainbow stories. One claims that the rainbow originated as a result of a love affair between Hina and the god Tangaroa. Once, it says, Hina was bathing in the refreshing waters on earth, when she was seen by the great god Tangaroa from his home above. He unfastened his *malo* (loincloth) and allowed it to unravel and hang down to earth so that Hina could climb the "rainbow" and join him in heaven. Many children were produced from their union. In another story, Hina fell in love with a mortal man and invited him to come live with her in the moon. As years passed and he neared death, Hina grieved, and she sent a rainbow to span the distance from the moon to earth so that her beloved could return to earth to die. For, you see, had he died on the moon, he would have introduced death into the other world, and Hina could not have been responsible for that. A double rainbow in Māori myth is the result of the god Uenuku and his lover Kahukura embracing in the heavens. The darker and usually the higher portion of the two arches is male, while the lighter and lower arch is female. 'Ānuenue appears as the rainbow maiden in several Hawaiian legends. In the lengthy story of the "Maid of the Golden Cloud," she acted as a messenger for her two brothers, the gods Tāne and Kanaloa. They sent her on several missions to obtain the children born to Hina and her husband Kū for them to rear as adoptive parents, as was the custom in ancient Hawai'i. In the romance of Lau-ka-ʻieʻie, 'Ānuenue also appeared but played only a minor part. In the ghost story of Laka, however, she played the lead, being of course Laka herself.

#### THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

In the ancient myths, thunder and lightning are closely intertwined just as the two phenomena are in the natural world. Some say that thunder and lightning are the results of Hina shaking out her tapa cloth, while other stories attribute them to Tāwhaki-mātea, the god of thunder and lightning and the grandson of

the thunder god Whaitiri. Tāwhaki-mā stands upon the mountaintops and clothes himself with lightning, and he stamps on the floor of heaven causing the thunder to roll across the earth. Forked lightning and sheet lightning are his children and foretell some misfortune that might befall earthlings. If lightning streaks straight down from the sky, misfortune will affect those immediately within its vicinity. If it aims toward other areas, those areas are sure to meet with some impending doom.

**See also** Deluge; Earthquakes; Ghosts; Hina; Lau-ka-‘ie‘ie; Moon, Origin of; Ocean; Rangi and Papa; Rū; Stars; Sun God; Tahaki; Uenuku and the Mist Maiden; Wākea

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## MIGRATIONS

Cultural Group: Eastern Polynesia

Many stories about the migrations and settlements of the ancient Polynesians have survived into modern times. Some, however, appear to have had their origins in the nineteenth century and, as a result, should not be taken at face value. Even some of the old tales are suspected of having been exaggerated, but the fact remains that Polynesians *did* settle the vast area of the Pacific Ocean, and that one accomplishment alone ranks it among the world’s most notable human achievements. Polynesian legends abound with tales of their mythological heroes—Rata, Tinirau, Māui, Tafa’i—who sailed the enormous ocean, defeating monsters and demons, and who saved the human race from one enemy or another. These wonderful stories are told elsewhere in this volume. Less remembered, however, are the ancient human explorers of the Pacific—those men and women who made the first settlement in these islands hundreds of years ago. This entry is about them.

Not all island groups, however, have settlement stories. Among those that do not are the Western Polynesian islands of Sāmoa and Tonga, which were settled well before 1000 B.C., and the Society Islands (Tahiti) and the Marquesas, the earliest ones settled in Eastern Polynesia. These islands maintain that they were



the center of human creation, and, therefore, there was no need for a settlement from somewhere else. The few migration stories summarized below were selected as representative of the many that could have been chosen.

#### NEW ZEALAND (AOTEAROA)

The New Zealand Māori tell of the first discovery of their country by the great explorer Kupe (before A.D. 1000) and then a few centuries later by a group of Polynesians who emigrated in their numerous canoes and settled the islands from their homeland in Hawaiki.

Kupe's discovery of Aotearoa came about as a result of a tangled love affair—Kupe was in love with his good friend's wife. One day Kupe and his friend Hoturapa went fishing on the open sea. After Kupe dropped his line, he complained to Hoturapa that something was wrong with it and suggested that Hoturapa dive down into the water and find out what was the matter. Not suspecting foul play, Hoturapa did as his friend asked and dived to the bottom of the sea, but then Kupe quickly hauled in his anchor and sailed back to shore. Unfortunately, Hoturapa drowned because he was too far out to sea to swim back. Once at home, Kupe kidnapped Hoturapa's wife Kura-marō-tini, fled with her from her revenging relatives, and quickly set sail in his famous canoe, the *Matahōrua*. Eventually, they reached an unfamiliar group of islands (Aotearoa), sailed around exploring them, and had numerous encounters with sea monsters and demons. After finding no human inhabitants, Kupe and Kura returned to Hawaiki to tell their family and friends of their remarkable adventures. It was these stories that later convinced others to leave Hawaiki and sail to Aotearoa.

Centuries later (ca. A.D. 1250), descendants who remembered Kupe's description of his new land left Hawaiki because of famine, overpopulation, adventure, or tribal warfare. Although seven canoes (the *Arawa*, *Tainui*, *Aotea*, *Kur-haupō*, *Toko-maru*, *Takitimu*, and *Matatūa*) are popularly remembered as being the ones that brought the first emigrants to New Zealand, there are others that have been identified. It is now believed that over several centuries there were actually many that may have made the trip from Hawaiki to Aotearoa.

One of the first to leave was Turi, a chief who remembered hearing of Kupe's incredible tales of his journey to a new world. Turi felt he had to leave Hawaiki because he was in the middle of a bitter quarrel between himself and High Priest Uenuku over the murder of Uenuku's son. The situation became so desperate that Turi decided that the most logical place of refuge would be Kupe's new land. So Turi and his family gathered together their belongings, loaded the ship with every type of animal and plant foods they could, and set sail in the *Aotea* canoe according to Kupe's directions. The *Te Ririno* canoe, carrying Turi's other fam-

ily members, accompanied them. Once out to sea, the *Aotea* developed a leak, and the group had to land on a small island for repairs. A dispute broke out regarding the proper sailing directions to Aotearoa, and the *Te Ririno* canoe headed off on its own; it eventually was lost and destroyed on a reef. Turi's family, aboard the *Aotea*, finally sighted Aotearoa, landed in a harbor now called Aotea, and then journeyed down the coast to the Patea River, where they settled. Turi and his wife had several children, and they became the progenitors of the Whanganui and Ngāti-Ruanui tribes of New Zealand. Stories of the other canoes' voyages to Aotearoa are just as fascinating, and their details can be found in the references following this entry.

#### HAWAI'I

There are three widely popular migration or settlement myths in Hawai'i—the stories of Hawai'i-loa, Pa'ao, and Moikeha—that tell us of the first immigrants into the Hawaiian Islands and then of several subsequent journeys back and forth centuries later. The first of these great explorers is Hawai'i-loa, whom the Hawaiians claim is the ancestor of all the Hawaiians. The Hawaiian legends begin far back into antiquity, far back in a mythical land called the Ka-'āina-kai-melemele-a-kane (Yellow Sea of the God Kāne) where Aniani-ka-lani lived with his four sons—Hawai'i-loa, Kī, Kanaloa, and La'a-kapu. The legends maintain that these four sons were responsible for the original discovery and settlement of several major island groups of Polynesia. Hawai'i-loa settled Hawai'i, Kī settled Tahiti and its neighboring islands, and Kanaloa settled the Marquesas Islands further to the east.

The story of Hawai'i-loa, of course, is more detailed. It recounts that he was a great fisherman in Kāne's mythical land and spent months fishing out in the ocean with his expert navigator Makali'i. Once, while on a long voyage, they happened upon an inviting group of islands (Hawai'i) full of coconuts and kava. They decided to return home, bring back their families, and make this their new homeland. The stories maintain that Hawai'i-loa sailed several times to Tahiti, where his brother Kī now lived, to obtain suitable mates for his children. All modern-day Hawaiians, legends tell us, are descended from this initial group—the chiefly and priestly class from Hawai'i-loa's family and the commoners from Makali'i. During his last voyage to Tahiti, Hawai'i-loa discovered that his brother Kī had abandoned their old gods and was now worshiping a new one, whereupon, Hawai'i-loa returned back to Hawai'i and forbade anyone from ever visiting Tahiti again.

Apparently his *kapu* was recognized for centuries, for the next time we hear of a migration is the story of a priest named Pa'ao, who lived in northern Tahiti. He and his brother Lono-pele fought over some stolen food, and both of their

sons were killed. Pa'ao decided to leave Tahiti, so he gathered his belongings, family, navigator, and forty paddlers and set sail northward. Great winds were sent by the gods to thwart their mission, but they pressed ever onward until they reached the Puna coast on the Big Island of Hawai'i. Once ashore, Pa'ao constructed several *heiau* (temples) and dedicated them to the gods who had brought them safely to the islands. Eventually, Pa'ao returned to Tahiti once again for the purpose of reinstituting a fresh, royal bloodline into the royal lineage of Hawai'i, for the chiefly class of Hawai'i had intermarried so much with commoners that their lines were no longer pure. He returned to Hawai'i with Pili-ka'aiea, who became a beloved and respected chief and whose family line continued ruling in Hawai'i until the end of the nineteenth century. Genealogical pedigrees also indicate that the priestly lineage of Pa'ao's continued throughout the centuries until the death of King Kamehameha in 1819.

The third major story is of Moikeha, whom historians date as living sometime in the eleventh or twelfth century. Moikeha's grandfather Maweke sailed to Hawai'i with his family, including his three sons Mulieleali'i, Keaunui, and Kalehenui, and after landing, they divided the rule of the island of O'ahu between them. Apparently for some reason, Mulieleali'i's family returned to Tahiti, where his two sons Moikeha and Olopana become involved in a dispute over Olopana's wife Lu'ukia. As a result, Moikeha gathered his family, friends, and provisions and set sail for Hawai'i. The group first landed on the Puna coast of the Big Island, where his younger brothers ruled as chiefs. The rest of the party traveled from one island to another visiting old family members until they finally reach the island of Kaua'i. Eventually, Moikeha decided to send a ship once more to Tahiti to bring back his nephew (and adopted son) La'a, whom they had left behind. The aging Moikeha, however, knew he was too old to make the trip, so he proposed that one of his sons be in charge of the trip. After several contests among them, Moikeha's beloved Kila was chosen for the long journey. Having outfitted his canoes, Kila first sailed to each of the Hawaiian Islands visiting his relatives before setting out on such a long voyage. He eventually sailed south until he reached Tahiti, where he tried to find La'a. At first, his relatives told him that all of his family had died, but eventually he did find an uncle and nephew. Olopana, however, would not let his son leave until after he had died. After Olopana's death, La'a and Kila sailed back to Hawai'i, where Kila became the ruling chief of Kaua'i. La'a, we are told, was responsible for introducing several new innovations into Hawaiian society—specifically, the worship of wooden god images, the playing of drums, and the dancing of the hula.

After these three major voyages back and forth from Tahiti to Hawai'i, we never hear of any further two-way voyages until the coming of the Europeans in the eighteenth century.

## EASTER ISLAND

The story of the first Polynesian emigrants to Easter Island, some fifteen hundred years ago, is related in more detail under the entry “Hotu-Matua.” The surviving legends tell us that a group of individuals from the distant island of Marae-Renga became embroiled in a civil war between two rival chiefs—Hotu Matua and Oroï. Once one night, Hotu Matua dreamed of an island lying far to the east of them, and upon awakening, he sent out a scouting party to see if they could find it. After two months sailing, the party landed upon Rapanui (Easter Island), and while investigating its terrain, Hotu Matua, who could not wait for their return, came sailing into its harbor in two large canoes. Legends say that four hundred people accompanied him—even his old enemy, Oroï, who had stowed away on board one of the ships. The old conflict between the two broke out again, but it finally ended with the death of Oroï, leaving Hotu Matua the principal chief on the island. The Rapanui today maintain that they are all descendants of this original settlement.

**See also** Birdman Cult; Canoes; Chiefly Class; Hawaiki; Hawai’i-Loa; Hotu-Matua; Ocean; Rata or Laka; Tahaki; Tinirau

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**MOAI, EASTER ISLAND**

Cultural Group: Easter Island

Today, six hundred stone megalith statues, called *moai*, gaze out from their various resting places on Easter Island, a small Polynesian island located in the eastern Pacific a thousand miles from its nearest neighbor. These unique statues attest to the tenacity and determination of the ancient Easter Islanders to build appropriate monuments to their revered deities or ancestors despite the fact that they had only crude and primitive tools with which to sculpt them and then to move them from the quarry to their final resting place several miles away. The reasons for exerting so much human effort in building these strange-looking statues remain an enigma, and as a result, this puzzle is often referred to as the Mystery of Easter Island.

Unfortunately, the mystery may never be solved, since most of island’s ancient culture was destroyed long before Westerners had a chance to visit the



*Illustration 3.31: Drawing of an Easter Island moai as depicted by the artist Duché de Vancy in 1786. (Francois Godefroy. Insulaires et monumens de Île de Pâques. By permission of National Library of Australia.)*

island and make reliable accounts of exactly why and how the statues were fashioned. The first modern foreigner to visit the island was the Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen, who landed there on Easter Day in 1722, and thus its name “Easter Island.” Several other European navigators visited the island in the eighteenth century—Filipe González in 1770, James Cook in 1774, and Jean de la Pérouse in 1786, whose artist, Duché de Vancy, provided the best drawings and

descriptions of the statues in the eighteenth century (see Illustration 3.31). It wasn’t until the twentieth century, however, that scientific expeditions provided more complete, detailed records regarding the statues and the few remnants of the mysterious Easter Island hieroglyphs. These researchers were Katherine Routledge (1914), Alfred Métraux and Henri Lavachery (1934–1935), Thor Heyderdahl (1955–1961), and William Mulloy (1960s and 1970s), and their published results provide the basis for most of the current academic discussions regarding the mystery of Easter Island.

The origin of the Easter Islanders is shrouded in mystery because of their contradictory tales of their own origins, the various archaeological expeditions, and the anthropological work of Thor Heyderdahl almost fifty years ago. The orthodox view is that the islanders migrated from the west possibly by A.D. 500, most likely from the Marquesas Islands in Eastern Polynesia, despite the popular and sensational versions that claim they came from South America, Melanesia, the lost continent of Mu, or from outer space.

Rapanui’s ancient past has been divided into three major periods—Early (A.D. 500–1000), Middle (1000–1600), and Late Period (1600—)—and the *moai* building period extended from about A.D. 500 to 1600, when tribal warfare between the islanders resulted in the decline of the population and culture. During the battles, many of the *moai* were overturned from their *ahu* (bases), and some were destroyed. Carving of new statues ceased, and finished statues were left to remain at the quarry sites. Such were the conditions when Roggeveen happened upon the island in 1722.



*Illustration 3.32: Moai busts on Easter Island. (Kevin Schafer/CORBIS)*

Apparently, the Easter Islanders brought with them the Polynesian tradition of building *ahu* (raised platforms) around which they lived and worked. Easter Island *ahu*, however, are much larger in size and complexity than the *ahu* constructed by their Polynesian cousins to the west. Easter Islanders also brought with them the tradition of carving ancestral figures, and for the first few hundred years after their arrival, most of the figures they carved were small and unadorned. Legend tells us, however, that once an islander discovered a dense basalt quarry in the Rano Raraku Volcano crater and thought that a large figure could be carved from the stone he found there. Two friends sought out the advice of an oracle, who revealed to them how the statue should be formed. Extensive work began immediately and, theoretically, it never finished until almost a thousand years later when nearly 600 statues had been carved (150, however, remain unfinished in the quarries). (See Illustration 3.32.)

The unfinished statues pretty much reveal how they were carved. Large trenches were cut around the outlined stone figure from which the carvers would work. As they chipped away the stone with their primitive stone mauls, the workers cleared and pushed the rubble down the hillside. The statue was kept intact by an uncut spine running down its back. Once finished, the workers slung ropes from above and wrapped them strategically around the statue; then the





*Illustration 3.33: Moai with topknots at Ahu Anakena, Easter Island. (Wolfgang Kaehler/CORBIS)*



statue's spine was severed, and the statue raised upright. The statues were then "finished" and transported several miles away to their final resting places. For many years, it remained a mystery just how they were able to transport these huge megaliths, since the largest unfinished statue is no less than 65 feet (20 meters) long. In the 1960s, archaeologist William Mulloy proposed that they were transported by the use of a large forked sled attached to the front of the statue in a system of leverage using a bipod. Mulloy maintained that it would have taken 30 men 1 year to carve an average-sized statue, then 90 men 2 months to move it from the quarry, and then another 3 months to get it erect. Many statues were broken along the way, and they lie silently along the tracks from the quarry.

Remarkably, the statues all resemble each other, and there appears no evolutionary variation in style or design once the original design had been established. The heads make up approximately one-half the size of the statue; more precisely the statues are actually busts rather than full-length figures. Most have extended or elongated earlobes, heavy foreheads, ski-type noses, and sharp chins. In typical Polynesian style, they have remarkably long fingers, which are carved around their waists, and each statue is adorned with a topknot "hat" (see Illustration 3.33), which was carved separately in a quarry in Punapau crater. The largest statue ever raised upon an *ahu* stood 37 feet (11.5 meters) high and weighed almost 100 tons.

We may never know the inspiration behind these stone statues. Some say it was the desire to portray deceased chiefs; others say the statues represent their gods. Unfortunately, the sudden decline of *moai* building along with the overall collapse of the culture several centuries ago prevents the real story from ever being known. But the mystery of *moai*'s origins and the reasons for building these megaliths still remain. Modern gas and electrical engines have been used to stand many of these statues upright, and they once again gaze over the horizon as enduring monuments to a people who, with crude instruments, created some of the greatest stone monuments of all times.

**See also** Birds; Birdman Cult; Hotu-Matua; Makemake; Migrations; Temples

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**MONSTERS**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Ancient Polynesians were extremely superstitious. They believed their world was inhabited not only by their traditional gods, but by other mythological creatures such as elves, fairies, ghosts, and monsters of all sorts. (Elves, fairies, and ghosts are discussed elsewhere in this volume.) Terrifying monsters of one form or another appear in almost all Polynesian legends. Some of these tales were told to glorify the bravery and courage of the mighty heroes who confronted the monsters, and others were told to create fear and trembling in the minds of the eager listeners. Some stories, like the proverbial fairy tales in other countries, impart certain moral or ethical lessons to children. For all these reasons, Polynesians wove fantastic stories of mythical monsters in their lengthy legends of gods, goddesses, and heroes.

One form of monster found pretty much worldwide is the giant, either in human or animal form. Māori stories tell of giants who once inhabited South Island before the Māoris landed in New Zealand. They say these giants were so tall they could stride mountains, drink up entire riverbeds, and transform themselves into whatever form they wanted. They were called Kahui-Tipua, and some legends maintain that they savagely hunted with two-headed giant dogs.

Samoa legends maintain that a giant ogre by the name of Gaugatolo once lived in the islands and was feared by everyone. One night, the villagers of Gāga'emalae decided to set a trap and slay the monster. (Gāga'emalae is located on the southwest coast of Savai'i, and the area is rich with tales of monsters and demons.) Unfortunately, the whole affair ended tragically for the villagers. One villager feigned to be dead and was placed in the middle of the road, covered with tapa cloth. Some of the other villagers sat around the "corpse," singing dirges and wailing at the top of their lungs, while the brave warriors secretly hid in the trees on each side of the valley. Their plan was to trap Gaugatolo when he came looking for the cause of all the noise. Finally, Gaugatolo approached, but it was so dark he could not see where he was going. His strident steps caused the mountains on both sides of the valley to collapse. The two camps of warriors hiding nearby fled in fear; some dived into the ocean and swam for safety to the nearby village of Sala'ilua, where they hid among the sleeping villagers. Many of the others were caught and eaten as Gaugatolo pursued them. When Gaugatolo finally arrived at Sala'ilua, he saw that everyone was asleep. In order to discover which ones were from Gāga'emalae, he went from hut to hut sniffing and licking every villager. Those that tasted salty were grabbed and gobbled up, for they must have been the warriors who swam the salty ocean in their flight from Gāga'emalae. The story ends by saying that "many lost their lives that night."

The Tuamotuans assert that they were visited anciently on several occasions by foreign giants who caused all sorts of destruction to their islands. When two giant ogres landed at Ngake on Marokau atoll, they were attacked by Te Huo and his brother Mati. The giants were slain, but not before a huge hole had been formed in the ground from their fierce fighting. Two other giants, we are told, landed at Hao Island and sought refuge in the *marae* (temple). The king tried to persuade them to leave but to no avail. Finally he roasted and fed them dog meat, which he knew they abhorred. Upon discovering the treachery, the giants went into a rage. They picked up huge boulders and coconut trees and threw them across the island. The gashes in the reef and landscape and the huge boulders lying about can still be seen today. One fearful Tuamotuan giant, named Hītiraumea, had gills behind his ears that would allow him to breathe underwater similar to a fish.

In New Zealand, one ogress by the name of Houmea had an insatiable hunger. When her husband went fishing, she secretly ate up all the catch and then blamed it on the fairies or robbers. Of course, after several instances like this, her husband started to doubt her word. So one day, he asked his two children to watch their mother and report whether or not she had eaten the fish. Again, the same thing happened. Houmea ate up the entire day's catch, tore up the surrounding bushes, and blamed it on the robbers. The children reported the truth to their father, and a fierce domestic quarrel followed. The next day, the husband set out again to do his daily fishing. In revenge for her children's disloyalty, Houmea called them over to her and swallowed both children, one gulp at a time. When the husband returned and did not see his children, he suspected the worst. He called his wife to his side and examined her lips for any traces of the dastardly deed. He chanted a magical spell that caused the children to spring forth alive from Houmea's stomach. After that episode, of course, both husband and children feared Houmea. The next time she complained of being hungry, however, the husband asked her to open her mouth wide. She was so engrossed in expecting a huge morsel of food, she did not see her husband take some wooden thongs, pick up some hot coals, and thrust them down her throat. Of course, she perished, and that was the end of the nasty ogress called Houmea. There exist many other Polynesian stories that tell of wicked ogresses or witches who are killed by the customary manner of forcing hot coals down their necks.

Certain natural geographical sites were also believed to be inhabited by demons or goblins that caused fear and trembling in the hearts of the Polynesians. These sites were often trees, large boulders, mountain ranges, streams, lakes, or ponds that were possessed by some obnoxious spirit who disliked humans disturbing his or her peace. Any mortal passing by had to placate the spirit by making some offering, no matter how small, and by reciting certain

charms; otherwise, they might find themselves in mortal danger, or at least followed by all manner of back luck.

Other mythological monsters feared by most Polynesians were giant lizards (called *mo'o* or *moko*), whose forms differed little from the descriptions of the dragons described in medieval European legends, except that the Polynesian lizards did not spew forth fire from their mouths. Lizards are quite common throughout the islands, and some—the *tuatara* in New Zealand, for example—grow to two feet in length with a spiked crest down the middle of their backs. Enlarged to nearly the size of a whale, the presence of such a giant lizard would indeed cause fear and trembling even in the most courageous listener.

The most feared *mo'o* in Hawai'i was Mo'oinanea, who traditionally was responsible for bringing the first lizards to the islands many years ago. She and her kin settled in Nu'uaniu Valley, O'ahu, located just mountainside of present-day downtown Honolulu. She was a demigoddess whose powers rivaled Hawai'i's other major gods, Kū, Kāne, and Kanaloa, and she often appeared to mortals as a beautiful woman. Her *mo'o* descendants spread throughout the islands, and many of her descendants jealously guarded their paths over the mountains or across the lakes and streams. Human intruders to these parts who had not offered up the required sacrifice or chant were usually slain. Two such *mo'o* sisters guarded the passage over the *pali* (pass) between Honolulu and Kailua, a town located on the other side of the Ko'olau Mountains. Today, two huge black stones mark their original residence, and foot travelers crossing the *pali* today usually leave some sort of offering upon the stones. These Hawaiian *mo'o* eventually intermarried with the local inhabitants, and from them descended some of the most famous rulers and priests in all Hawai'i. Ancient priests and sorcerers established religious cults to these demigods and appeased them by offering up the proper prayers, sacrifices, and incantations.

In New Zealand, *moko* monsters are called *taniwa*. Many of them live in the islands' numerous lakes and harbors, and their movements in the water often cause small tsunamis. One *taniwa* by the name of Tutae-poroporo used to live in the Whanganui River (southern tip of North Island) and threatened every human being that came near the place. Once, a powerful Māori chief named Aohehu happened by, and Tutae-poroporo gobbled him up. Fortunately, Aohehu was carrying his enchanted spear with him. Once inside the *taniwa's* stomach, Aohehu offered the required prayer to his spear, and with it, he sliced open a huge hole in the *taniwa's* side. Tutae-poroporo flailed and dashed about until it finally died from exhaustion. Aohehu, however, was saved, and the *taniwa* no longer bothered anyone again. Local stories of *taniwa* such as this one are told in almost every village and hamlet throughout New Zealand.

Other formidable creatures encountered in Polynesian legends are giant eels, cuttlefish, birds, and sharks, all of whom have magical powers and who, on occasion, can turn themselves into other animals or human beings. Sometimes, they appear half animal and half human.

*See also* Elves and Fairies; Ghosts; *Menehune*

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## MOON, ORIGIN OF

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

The goddess Hina is recognized throughout Polynesia as being the “woman in the moon” (see the “Hina” entry in this chapter), but there are, unfortunately, very few Polynesian myths that detail the moon’s actual origin. All of the legends about Hina being the moon goddess or the woman in the moon assume that the moon already existed, and that Hina decided to leave her abode here on earth, for one reason or another, and take up residence in the moon. There are only a few passing references in these myths that actually shed light on the moon’s origin.

Many of these legends simply refer to the sun and moon as being brought into existence by one of the great gods of creation, and they say nothing more. There are a few legends, however, that offer some interesting alternatives. The Tongans and the Cook Islanders say that the sun and moon are the eyes of Vātea or Ātea (space) and that, at one time, Vātea and his son Tongaiti claimed parentage of a particular child born to the earth goddess Papa. Their heated argument became bitter, and in the end, the child was cut in two. Vātea gathered his half together, rolled it up into a ball, and thrust it up into the heavens, where it became the sun. Tongaiti, however, neglected his half and left it lying upon the ground, until he saw the beautiful sun rushing through the heavens and became jealous. Not to be outdone, Tongaiti took his half, and when the sun went down that evening, he thrust it high into the sky, where it became the moon. Unfortunately, his half had been drained of all of its blood while lying upon the ground. It could not shine as brightly as the sun, nor could it make the darkness disappear like the sun. Since that time, the powerful sun dominates the day with its warmth, while the weaker moon sheds its delicate light upon the earth at night.

According to the New Zealand Māoris, the reason that the moon (Marama) wanes and eventually disappears is because she has a disease that eternally consumes her. It gradually causes her to grow smaller and smaller until she is forced to go and bathe in the magical Wai-ora-a-Tāne (Living Waters of Tāne), Tāne being the god of good and light. Afterwards, the moon is revitalized with the force and vigor she had when she was first created and sets out once again on her journey across the sky.

**See also** Hina; Māui; Sun God

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## **MUNI: THE TONGAN HERCULES**

Cultural Group: Tonga

The tales of Muni-matamahae (Muni of the torn eye) are extremely popular in Tonga, and several versions of this ancient legend have survived. Muni's marvelous exploits remind us so much of the difficult labors successfully performed by Hercules, the great hero of Greek mythology, that he is popularly referred to as the Tongan Hercules.

The legends tell us that Muni-matamahae's parents, Motukuveevalu and his wife Kae, lived in Tongatapu (Tonga), but the land was being ruled by a wicked cannibal named Pungalotohoa, who killed and even ate his own people. Pungalotohoa became so threatening to Motukuveevalu that he, along with many other men of the village, decided to flee and take refuge out in the bush. Some time later, Pungalotohoa decided to sail to Ha'apai Island, and when Motukuveevalu heard of this, he suggested to his wife Kae that she should gain passage and stay there with her parents because she was pregnant. Kae agreed, gathered her belongings together, and set sail with the other passengers. As they neared Ha'apai, however, Motukuveevalu's enemies on board recognized Kae and killed her. They tore her unborn child from her abdomen and threw it overboard. The abandoned child, however, miraculously survived and was carried by the winds and tides to a beach called Muni.

Once on the beach, the young defenseless baby was vulnerable to the elements and wild animals. Several sea birds flew down and began pecking his face, and, as a result, he was forever left with scars. For this reason, he was always known as *matamahae* (torn face). By and by, an old couple from Lofanga found

the baby and took him home to rear as their own. Muni grew up to be the strongest lad in the village, and he could beat up any of his playmates. His naughty and mischievous ways also provoked his neighbors, who eventually agreed to get rid of him. So one day, the village council decided to assign him several impossible tasks, and told him that if he could not perform them satisfactorily, he and his parents would be exiled or executed.

The first impossible task given to Muni's family was to weave half of a large communal fishing net by themselves while the rest of the villagers wove the other half. Muni told his parents not to worry and to forget about the work. Meanwhile, he set himself to the task, and well before the other villagers had finished their half, Muni presented his before the chief. The villagers were dumbfounded, so they gave him another task to perform.

This time, the elders proposed that Muni and his parents build one-half of a huge fence around an enormous enclosure by the following day. Again, Muni successfully accomplished the task without difficulty, and once more the elders assigned him another task. This time it was to construct an outrigger canoe and a shed in which to house the canoe, all within a short period of time. Muni set about felling trees and gathering materials to build the boat. He completed his task in two days, well before the rest of the villagers had even begun theirs. Again having failed to deter the strong young man, the elders agreed to another plan. This time, Muni and his parents had to watch over a boat anchored in the bay during the night. Nothing could befall the ship or Muni would be punished. During the night, the villagers cut the boat's line, broke holes in the sides of the vessel, and pushed it out to sea. Sleeping aboard the boat, Muni and his parents floated out to sea, further and further from their home village. When Muni awoke and saw the boat sinking, he looked for his paddles and water bailers, but they were gone. Desperately, Muni took a food bowl and bailed out as much water as he could; then he tore a plank from the side of the canoe, and rowed swiftly until they finally reached land. By this time, the boat had made its way to Fiji, where he and his parents landed and set up camp. During the night, Muni's parents awoke and, thinking Muni was still asleep, talked about their love for him and about the day they found him on the beach. Muni overheard them and demanded to be told of his parents. Sadly, they revealed the story of his mother and told him that his father was hiding in the bush from a powerful cannibal on Tongatapu. They felt it was time for Muni to meet his father, so they gave him proper instructions to get back safely to his father's village.

Eventually, Muni made his way home to his father Motukuveevalu, who embraced him and welcomed him to his makeshift abode. The next day, Muni set about clearing the trees and foliage around his shelter and building a fire to cook food. Motukuveevalu was terrified, for now his protection was gone, and



the powerful cannibal chief could find him and his associates from the smoke of the campfire. Muni, however, told him not to fear, and on the next day, he set out to confront Pungalotahoa. Arriving at his dwelling, Muni tore down his gate, raped his concubines, and pulled up his prized kava plant in the yard. Returning home and hearing what had happened, Pungalotohoa pursued Muni and angrily challenged him to a throwing contest and then a boxing match. In the final battle, Pungalotahoa's body was so completely crushed that he died, but shortly thereafter he revived and gave Muni his lands, titles, and possessions—even his wives. Muni then summoned his father and all of the other expatriates home from the bush to live in peace and safety. He gathered all of the villagers around him, and, we are told, he became a beloved ruler and lived happily ever after.

**See also** Cannibalism and Human Sacrifices; Chiefly Class; Kava; Māui

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## **OCEAN**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

When seen from above in an airplane, the many islands of Polynesia appear as tiny specks of land floating in a vast expanse of water we call the Pacific (called *moana* by Polynesians). The total surface area of land in the Pacific compared to the total surface area of the ocean equates to about two units of land to about one thousand units of water. Anciently, the greatest percentage of people on these small islands lived near the shore in close proximity to the ocean (with perhaps the exception of the Māoris of New Zealand, who lived on two islands much larger than the combined total of all the other Polynesian islands). The ocean, therefore, played a major role in the everyday life of the Polynesians. First of all, it provided them with their daily supply of protein—fish—and the daily occupation of almost every adult male was to fish in the lagoons or out in the open ocean. These waters also provided sporting entertainment such as swimming, canoe racing, and surfing, and it is not surprising, therefore, that every Polynesian took to the water very early in life. Furthermore, the Polynesians used the ocean as great highways on which they easily sailed from island to island, whereas, in some areas of the world, the ocean acted as a hindrance, like mountain ranges might do, in preventing contact with one another.

Polynesian myths abound with stories about the ocean. All of the gods and heroes are described as expert fishermen, and many of them swim to the bottom of the sea, where they carry out their exploits and defeat their formidable ene-

mies. The mythical Polynesian homeland of Hawaiki and the supernatural upper world lie far out beyond the ocean's horizon—where the ocean meets the sky. These, likewise, provide fascinating subject matter for hundreds of legends and tales.

The creation of the ocean, on the other hand, appears shrouded in miasmal mist. Samoans and Tongans tell nothing of the first creation of the ocean. To them, everything in the beginning was already covered with primeval water, and it was only later that the earth was formed, some say by Māui, who “fished” the islands up from the depths of the ocean. Others say the earth was formed by the gods who threw rocks down from heaven to create the islands. Similarly, Tahitian myths tell of the oceans being created by the gods, but with little detail. The great god Ta'aroa, for example, simply created all things in the hollow of his hand, and then he formed the earth. Another Tahitian myth (like the Samoan and Tongan myths) assumes that the primeval waters already existed, and Ta'aroa created rock and sand (land) in the midst of the waters. Likewise, New Zealand myths suggest that all waters were created before the separation of Sky Father and Earth Mother. In Māori legends, “ocean” is female—called Hine-moana, whose mother, Para-whenua-mea, daughter of the great god Tāne, is the origin of all waters of the earth, including the rivers and streams that feed the ocean. Hine-moana continually wars with her ancestor Mother Earth and constantly sends her powerful waves and tides to assault her. But Mother Earth is forever being guarded by her daughters Hine-one (Sand Woman), Hine-tuakirikirī (Gravel Woman), and Rakahore (Rocks). We are also told that Hine-moana and her husband, Kiwa, are the progenitors of the varied forms of ocean life—including various types of fish, shellfish, and seaweed—through their several children.

**See also** Canoe; Deluge; Earthquakes; Fish, Battle of the; Hawaiki; Māui; Monsters; Rangi and Papa; Sharks; Underworld

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## OMENS AND SUPERSTITIONS

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Ancient Polynesians lived close to nature and to their deities. Their gods and goddesses as well as the spirits of their dead made their homes among the living and, as a result, they greatly influenced the daily lives of the Polynesians. Polynesians, therefore, looked everywhere for telltale signs that they thought might

foretell ill fortune, disaster, or even death. Similar to other cultures, these signs are called omens or superstitions. "Breaking a mirror means seven years' bad luck," "walking under a ladder brings bad luck," or "crossing the path of a black cat brings bad luck" are several superstitions that are well known in the United States.

The Polynesians were no exceptions, and perhaps because they lived in more primitive societies and believed in the closeness of the other world, they seemed to read omens, signs, and portents in almost everything that happened. The most trivial incident, for example, might actually foretell the coming of a most disastrous ill fortune upon someone. Despite a century or more of Christian influence, some of these superstitions still survive among the Polynesians, just as they do in our Western societies. Māori mythologies tell us that Aitua (misfortune or calamity) was the first-born son of the primal parents, Rangi (Sky Father) and Papa (Earth Mother), and that his descendants are the ones that bring bad luck to humans. Hundreds of these ancient bad luck omens (but only a few good luck ones) have been recorded, and the following is only a sampling of what has survived.

#### METEOROLOGICAL OMENS

Ancient Polynesians derived a vast amount of information from signs in the heavens, especially from the shape and movement of the clouds. If a large cloud appeared above a setting sun, it was surely the sign of the death of a high chief. Pointed cumulus clouds foretold rain and storms. Rainbows were often the sign of death, but at the time of birth, it was a favorable omen for the child. If anyone set out on a journey and spied a rainbow, that person generally returned home. Even parents warned their children about pointing toward a rainbow, lest their arms might begin to swell. The appearance of a rainbow during battle, however, foretold ultimate success. Astronomical omens were important as well. The strange movements or colorings of the stars, planets, sun, or moon all predicted future events. The eclipse of the sun (the god Ra) signified his displeasure. A comet foretold the imminent approach of a calamity—a disaster in war or sickness at home. A ring around the moon signified successful fishing, but a much larger ring foretold stormy weather ahead. The phase (night) of the moon at one's birth (astrology) indicated the future character of that individual. A light rain that fell upon ceremonies indicated the gods' approval, especially if they were being attended by the nobility (*ali'i*). Winds rustling the leaves of certain trees indicated that a particular spirit was wanting to communicate with the living. All other natural phenomenon, like thunder, lightning, whirlwinds, and landslides, were omens that needed to be heeded.

## ANIMAL, BIRD, AND FISH OMENS

Unusual behavior in animals, birds, and fish was often an indication of unusual future events. If you heard a bird cry on your left side, it indicated back luck, on the right side, good luck. Owls were considered wise birds, and if one was heard at night, it meant the approach of a war party. Feathers plucked from a bird caught in the forest had to be buried, lest the surviving birds fly away to another part of the island. Seeing an albino pigeon signified some calamity would befall the person who saw it, or that a near relative would pass away. Lizards were also considered especially ominous, and if one crossed your path, it was a very bad sign indeed. The howling of a dog at night meant that ghosts or spirits were somewhere near or that a death had occurred. Since most Polynesian men spent much of their time fishing, it is not surprising that a large number of omens were associated with the movements of fish. A large school of a certain fish, for example, might mean death or that the power of the chief would be transferred from him to another. If two parrot fish were observed "kissing," the fisherman knew his wife was flirting with someone else back home. If he happened to break his fishhook, he knew his wife was having sex with another man, and he dropped everything he was doing and headed back to shore.

## WOMEN

There were numerous omens surrounding the actions of women. Menstruating women especially were ominous. Of course during her menstrual period, a woman had to remain isolated in a hut built especially for that purpose. If she happened to walk on a beach, the shellfish would migrate elsewhere, and if it was through a gourd or sweet potato patch, the plants would die. A pregnant woman would not cut her hair lest the child's growth be stunted. If she dreamed of an open *tiare* blossom, her child would be a girl; if she dreamed of a *tiare* bud, the child would be a boy.

## OTHER HUMAN ACTIVITY

Numerous omens and superstitions pertained to the human body. Generally, the right side of humans was considered the strongest, and warriors, therefore, carried their weapons on the right side. Sneezing meant the coming of trouble, and a yawning fisherman meant he would catch no fish. It was considered unlucky to leave a row of unplaited work (baskets, mats, etc.) when quitting for the day, or to plait in the presence of strangers, or to plait after sunset. Similar to our modern superstitions, the Polynesians believed that ringing in the ears foretold the arrival of a visitor, and the throbbing of the foot certainly signified an impending journey.

Frequently the meanings of omens were quite explicit, but on some occasions, omens were subtle and required the services of an expert to determine their exact meanings. These experts, of course, were priests, and in some of the Polynesian societies, there were full-time specialists who spent their time observing the stars and sky, predicting the weather, and studying other unusual phenomenon. In Hawai'i, for example, they were called the *kahuna* (priest), *kilo-kilo* (astrologer, sky gazer), the *kahuna nānā uli* (weather predictor), the *kahuna kilo makani* (observer of the winds), and the *kahuna kilo hōkū* (observer of the stars and moon), all of whom were usually court favorites of the high chiefs. When contradictory meanings of an omen were given by several priests, or when the meaning of an omen was not clear, a priest would often resort to reading auguries (the entrails of certain animals) or to other divination practices such as spirit possession, dreams, or reading "tea" leaves (in this case kava remains).

**See also** Birds; Ceremonies, Religious; Ghosts; God Images; Mana; Monsters; Priests; Sorcery; *Tapu*; Temples; Warfare and War Gods—Kū, 'Oro, Nafanua  
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## PAI

Cultural Group: Tahiti

Pai, a powerful warrior of ancient Tahiti, resembles in many ways the mighty Achilles in Greek mythology. Pai was a mortal who gained superhuman strength, and because of this strength, he mingled with gods, defeated any mortal he chose to, and changed geographical features of the earth.

Like most Polynesian legends of heroes, this one begins with the story of his parents, Chief Rehia and his wife Huauri, who were both related to High Chief Ta'ihia of Tautira, located on the southeast coast of Tahiti. One day while out walking, Huauri heard conch shells blowing from the sea, and when she approached the seashore, she saw an enormous canoe full of the most delectable things to eat sailing within a stone's throw. Being pregnant, Huauri became obsessed with having some of these delicious foods, so she told her husband to welcome the guests ashore. He did, and the rowers told him that they were taking the prized pigs and bananas to High Chief Ta'ihia and his family. Knowing his

wife's intense cravings, Rehia traded the provisions for his finest colored feathers, mats, and beautiful tapa cloth. The rowers then turned their canoes around and headed back home to gather more provisions for the high chief.

Meanwhile, Rehia prepared a huge feast for his family and all of his neighbors. His enemies, however, started rumors that Rehia had actually stolen the chief's food and was distributing it around for his own honor and prestige. Some of Rehia's old enemies heard the rumors and decided it was time to take revenge. They sent word to Rehia and his wife, who had just delivered a baby girl, that they wanted to adopt their young daughter as their own queen. Of course, Rehia and Huauri were honored, and when the young girl was weaned, a group of warriors came with numerous presents of fine mats and feathers and took the baby home. On the way, however, they dashed out her brains against a tree and buried her body in their *marae* (outdoor temple). Shortly thereafter, Rehia and Huauri heard the terrible news of their daughter's death and went into deep mourning.

As years passed, Huauri became pregnant, and once again she had a craving, this time for some juicy yams that were out of season. Her husband, however, knew where he could find some of these wild yams growing on the mountainsides, so he set out. Not long into his search, he happened to meet two old witches, who told him exactly where he could find some of these delicious yams. He had to dig near a stone area (the *marae*). Rehia did what he was told, not knowing that this was the same *marae* where his daughter lay dead. He did indeed find some large yams, but little did he know that the witches were friends of his enemies. After Rehia had dug a huge hole in the ground seeking more yams, the two witches rolled an enormous stone over him and buried him alive.

Meanwhile at home, Huauri desperately waited for her husband, and when he did not come home, she knew that he had met with foul play. Fearing for her own life, she packed her belongings and fled, just in time. Shortly thereafter, Huauri delivered her child prematurely. She packed the fetus into a basket, hung it from a tree, and called upon the god Ta'aroa for protection. Immediately, a group of elves appeared before her and took the baby to the underworld. The young boy was placed inside a gourd, where he was nourished until the time of his birth. Then, he broke open the gourd and announced his arrival into the world. Word was sent to Ta'aroa about his birth, and after Ta'aroa had proved the strength of the young child, he took and dressed him formally in his first *malo* (loincloth) and gave him the name of Pai.

Because he was human, Pai was "imprisoned" in a small hut, where he was told that he had to live separately from the other gods and that he could not eat any of their sacred food. Soon, of course, Pai became hungry, and so he reached out between the slats of the hut and seized one of the beautiful bananas. At first, he was cautious about eating it, but after his first bite, he could not stop eating

the delicious fruit. He continued eating bananas day after day until he grew in such size and strength that he broke through his hut and ate everything in sight—sugarcane, pigs, fowl, fruit, dogs, taro, and yams. Of course, eating all of this sacred food caused him to grow in size and strength until one day, he realized that he had eaten everything in sight. There was no more. Desperately, Pai finally called upon Ta'aroa, who appeared before him, vexed because his lands had been stripped of all his food. When Pai innocently called Ta'aroa "father," Ta'aroa sternly rebuked him and told him the truth of his mortal history, whereupon, Pai asked to be returned to his mother and the world of the living.

Ta'aroa did as he requested. When Pai arrived at the gates of the upper world, he was stunned at the dazzling sun and the beautiful scenery, and dutifully he offered sacrifices and prayers to his gods at his family's *marae*. He then sought out his mother and called from outside the hut to let him in. Thinking it was her old enemies, Huauri at first refused, but when Pai convinced her of his identity, she opened the door and embraced her long-lost son. Shortly thereafter, Huauri went to the stream to gather drinking water, where she was accosted by two warriors who had been sent by her enemies to find out whether her son had truly returned. She honestly replied that he had, whereupon the warriors told her that they would return on the morrow to meet him in battle.

Huauri rushed home and informed her son that they were doomed, but little did she realize the strength of her son—that Ta'aroa had implanted warrior strength in his Herculean body. Pai looked for weapons to defend himself, and at first tried to use his father's, but they were too flimsy, so he went into the forest and formed weapons stronger than seen by any other mortal. By the next morning, he was ready to meet his formidable challengers. The messengers of the king arrived and escorted Pai to the assembly grounds, where everyone who had heard of the impending battle had gathered. Nine robust opponents were waiting to challenge Pai to a duel. In breathless silence, the throng witnessed the vain attempts of each of the fighters to defeat Pai. One by one, Pai countered their attacks with spears that killed some and severely wounded others. Eventually, Pai was proclaimed the winner, and a reconciliation was made between Pai and his parents' old enemies.

Now that his sister's death had been atoned, Pai set out to find the two witches responsible for his father's death. When he found them in a cave up on the mountainside, he killed them. From their bones, he made tips for his spear (named Ru-fau-tumu) that gave it magical powers, and with his new formidable weapon, he entered into the service of high chief Ta'ihia and served him for many years.

Pai's greatest feat, however, was yet to come. It involved saving the island of Mo'orea (off the northeast coast of Tahiti) from being stolen and taken back



to the island of Rā'iatea. Apparently Hiro, the god of thieves, decided that he wanted to reunite Mo'orea to Rā'iatea, where legends say it originally existed. So one night, Hiro and his followers rowed over to Mo'orea, lassoed the peaks of Mount Rotui, and began to row fiercely back to Rā'iatea. At that moment, Pai was asleep at Puna'auia, Tahiti, where he was awakened by his friendly gods, who told him what was happening and that they needed his help. Pai hurriedly made his way to Tata'a Hill (on the northwest coast of Tahiti), where he took his magical spear and so robustly threw it across the channel that it pierced Mount Mou'a-puta on Mo'orea and then sailed on until it hit the southern tip of Rā'iatea. Its thud was so loud that it woke up all the roosters, who began to crow loudly from one island to another. Fearing the coming of daybreak, Hiro and his band of thieves rushed to their canoes with only a small cone of the mountain with them. They dragged it back to Rā'iatea, however, where they placed it on a hillside at Opoa, and the beautiful island of Mo'orea has ever remained where it is today—a sister island to Tahiti.

*See also* Hiro; Lono; Māui; Rata or Laka; Tahaki; Tangaloa; Tinirau

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**PELE (PERE)**

Cultural Group: Primarily Hawai'i

Pele ("pay-lay"), the volcano goddess, is unmistakably the most popular goddess in all of Hawai'i (see Pele statue in Illustration 3.34). She is not known throughout the rest of Polynesia, except slightly in Tahiti by the name of Pere, the goddess of fire. The Tahitian story may be of modern origin, however, and may have been introduced only after European contact in the early 1800s, when the Christian missionaries from Hawai'i could have taken the story to Tahiti.

The Pele cycle of myths is one of the most elaborate in all of Polynesia. It tells of her birth and genealogy in a faraway mythical land; of her dispute with her family and of her migration to find a suitable home in the Hawaiian Islands; of her tragic love affair with Chief Lohi'au of Kaua'i (the Hi'iaka story); of the stormy love affair between her and the demigod Kamapua'a; and of her interfering in the affairs of Hawaiian nobility. Another ever-growing body of modern literature comes from humans who have had encounters with the goddess in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The ancient Hawaiian legends tell us that Pele was born to the fertility goddess Haumea and her husband Moemoe, who live in a land lying far to the south of Hawai'i called Kahiki (Tahiti?). Pele's family consists of several brothers and sisters, her beloved sister Hi'iaka being the youngest. One legend recounts how

Pele seduced the husband of her older sister, the sea goddess, and of Pele's subsequent forced expulsion from Kahiki. She gathered other members of her family together, set out in her great canoe, the *Honua-i'a-kea*, and sailed northward, as recounted in this ancient chant:

The woman Pele comes from Kahiki,  
From the land of Polapola,  
From the ascending mist of Kane, from the clouds that move in the sky.  
From the pointed clouds born at Kahiki.  
The woman Pele was restless for Hawai'i.  
"Fashion the canoe Honua-i'a-kea,  
As a canoe, O Kamohoali'i [Pele's brother], for venturing to the island."  
Completed, equipped, is the canoe of the gods,  
The canoe for (Pele)-of-the-sacred-earth to sail in.  
From the straight course the heavenly one turned  
And went around the island, and the multitude of the gods stepped ashore.  
"Who were behind at the stern of the canoe?"  
"The household of Pele and her company,  
Those who bail, those who work the paddles,  
On the canoe were Ku and Lono."  
It came to land, rested there,  
The island rose before them, Hi'iaka stepped ashore seeking for increase of divinity,  
Went and came to the house of Pele.  
The gods of Kahiki burst into lightning flame with roar and tumult,  
Lightning flames gushed forth,  
Burst forth with a roar. (Beckwith 1940, 172–173)

As they neared the Hawaiian Islands, they were met with lightning and volcanic eruptions. The group traveled from one island to another trying to find a suitable homesite. Each time as Pele dug into the earth with her divining rod, her *pā'oa*, the sea rushed in and drove her away. It was none other than her older sister, Nā-maka-o-Kaha'i, the sea goddess, who had followed them from Kahiki. On the island of O'ahu, Pele carved three craters, known today as Diamond Head, Koko Crater, and Makapu'u. From O'ahu the group continued its journey down the island chain to Maui, where Pele scooped out the famous Hale-a-ka-lā (House of the sun) Crater. Finally after reaching the Big Island of Hawai'i, Pele finds a suitable spot and establishes a permanent home in Kī-lau-ea, an active volcanic crater on Mauna Loa (long mountain).

Many legends and tales are told of Pele. One of the longest and most romantic is the story of Pele and her young sister Hi'iaka. The English translation takes over two hundred printed pages. The legend begins with Pele's migration from Kahiki and the establishment of her home on the island of Hawai'i. It then

relates a charming story of the origin of the hula, the traditional dance of Hawai'i, in which Pele and her sisters decided to go on an enjoyable outing down to the beach. Upon arrival, they caught sight of two friends of Hi'iaka performing a unique dance. Pele was enthralled over their graceful movements and asked her sisters to perform in a like manner. They declined, saying that they did not know how. Hi'iaka, however, took up the challenge. She first decorated her friends with leis (flower necklaces) made from her famous *lehua* blossoms (see Illustration 3.28 in the entry for "Hina"), and then she chanted while she gracefully danced. As a result of her endeavors, Hi'iaka became the supreme



*Illustration 3.34: A wooden statue of Pele, the Hawaiian fire goddess, possibly dating to the seventeenth or eighteenth century. (Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

patroness of the hula, and all *mele pule* (prayer chants) for the hula are named after her or her sister Pele. Many of the traditional hulas performed in Hawai'i today are dedicated to the two sisters, and as you listen to the accompanying chants in the background, you can discern one or both of their names.

Shortly after this event, Pele returned home and fell into a deep sleep. In it, her spirit was transported northwestward to the island of Kaua'i, where she met and fell in love with a local chief called Lohi'au. They remained together for several days. Pele finally decided to return to Hawai'i but told Lohi'au that she would send a messenger back for him within five days. Lohi'au, however, was distraught over her departure and, unbeknownst to Pele, hung himself with his *malo* (loincloth).

Meanwhile on Hawai'i, Pele stirred from her sleep and asked her sisters for a volunteer to return to Kaua'i to accompany Lohi'au back to Hawai'i. None of her sisters except Hi'iaka accepted this dangerous and formidable task. Before Hi'iaka set out, however, Pele bestowed various supernatural powers upon her

but warned her that she had to return within forty days and that she must not touch or embrace Lohi'au. Hi'iaka set out, but her journey was marred by many supernatural enemies who wished to obstruct her mission. She finally arrived on Kaua'i but only to learn of Lohi'au's death and burial. Hi'iaka, however, was not deterred from her mission. She summoned up his spirit and with her magical powers restored him to life. Shortly thereafter, the two set out on their arduous journey to Hawai'i and to the awaiting Pele.

During their return home, Hi'iaka and Lohi'au were delayed by numerous spirits and forces who opposed the proposed union between a goddess and a mere mortal. Meanwhile, the long delay had enraged Pele, who believed that her sister had disobeyed her two commands. She belched forth fire and lava, in which Hi'iaka's favorite *lehua* flowers and friends were destroyed. It was true that, during their long voyage to Hawai'i, Hi'iaka and Lohi'au had fallen in love. They feared the worst from Pele, and they swore their love for each other. Finally, the two arrived on the island of Hawai'i, where Hi'iaka learned of the death of her beloved friends and of the destruction of her *lehua* blossoms. On the rim of Kī-lau-ea Crater and in Pele's full view, Hi'iaka and Lohi'au defied Pele and embraced. Enraged, Pele sent forth her vengeful fire and brimstone to destroy the pair. Being mortal, Lohi'au was immediately consumed, but Hi'iaka's magical powers saved her. Distraught, Hi'iaka swore to leave Pele's royal court on Hawai'i and to return to Kaua'i, where she and Lohi'au first met. Once again, Lohi'au's spirit was caught in its wanderings and returned to its charred body on Hawai'i. Alive again, he made his way back to Kaua'i, where the two lovers were reunited forever.

Pele is a goddess not to be reckoned with, and there are many legends that tell of Pele's vengeance upon anyone who offends her. One of the most popular is the story of Pele and Kamapua'a (pig-man), a demigod whose exploits themselves are legendary. One day, Kamapua'a decided to visit Pele in the guise of a handsome, mortal man and to offer his love. Pele was not deceived, however, and in her usual rage, sent flames and lava to engulf him. Kamapua'a retorted by sending deluges of water upon her. The battle eventually ended and the two decided to divide the island of Hawai'i between them. Pele kept her favorite lands of Puna, Ka-ū, and Kona (the volcanic lava lands), and Kamapua'a acquired Kohala, Kamakua, and Hilo (the wet, windward districts of the island). Eventually, Pele fell in love with her arch enemy, and they had a son named 'Ōpelu-nui-kauha'alilo, who later becomes the progenitor of the ruling chiefs (*ali'i*) of Hawai'i.

It is reported that a particular chief, named Kahāwali, living in the Puna district of the Big Island, had a close encounter with the goddess. Appearing as a beautiful woman, Pele visited the district and challenged the young chief to a

*hōlua* race. (*Hōlua* is a sport similar to snow sledding except that it is done downhill on slippery grass.) Kahāwali rebuffed the woman and took off down the hill on his sled. Enraged at his rejection, Pele turned into a fiery lava flow and angrily pursued the young man down the hill. Fortunately, Kahāwali made it in time to the sea, where his brother saved him in his canoe. It goes without saying that the young man never returned to his home again.

In 1790, it appears that Pele may have interfered in the civil war that raged on the Big Island between chiefs Keōua and Kamehameha. Apparently Keōua and his men roused the anger of Pele, and as one of his contingents marched across her volcanic lands, she erupted and spewed ash everywhere, killing them all. Chief Keōua was so distraught that he gave up his battle against Kamehameha. His defeat, of course, led to the success of Kamehameha in the eventual unification of all the Hawaiian Islands under his jurisdiction. By the time of his death in 1819, Kamehameha had established a unified and independent kingdom that lasted until the overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani in 1893.

In 1824, chieftainess Kapi'olani (Arch of heaven), a new convert to Christianity, publicly denounced Pele on the rim of Kī-lau-ea Crater without a response from the sleeping goddess. Subsequent members of the Hawaiian nobility, however, were not nearly as bold. It is reported that during the devastating volcanic eruption of 1868, King Kamehameha V "sacrificed" all kinds of precious articles to the goddess. Diamonds, dresses, and the like were all thrown into the crater as an offering to placate the irate Pele. The articles were valued at \$8,000 and were paid for by the king's minister of the interior. Another eruption in 1881 threatened to destroy the town of Hilo, whereupon the formidable Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani (1826–1883), a descendant of King Kamehameha I and a believer in the old ways, sailed to Hawai'i, trekked up to the crater, made offerings (red handkerchiefs and brandy), and chanted loud prayers to Pele. Shortly thereafter, we are told, the lava flow stopped and Hilo was saved.

From time to time, other individuals in Hawai'i have reported seeing Pele in the form of a beautiful woman or a wrinkled old lady who asks favors of them. Sometimes these stories make their way into the local newspapers. No one on the Big Island doubts her existence when Kī-lau-ea Volcano erupts with its terrifying flames, smoldering ash, and destructive lava flows. Numerous gifts in the form of food, tapa cloth, or even bottles of whiskey are offered up to her to appease her in these threatening times.

Most prominent of the local personalities during the past century were George Lycurgus, longtime manager of the Volcano House, who appeased her by offering her gin, and Leatrice Bellesteros, "the lady in red," who claims to have had frequent visits from Pele and who helped her in healing ceremonies.

*See also* Dance; Fire; Hawaiki; Kamapua'a; Land

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*Star-Bulletin & Advertiser*, Sunday, 23 February 1969, front page.

## **PILI, LIZARD GOD OF SĀMOA**

Cultural Group: Sāmoa

The story of the lizard god Pili is known throughout Sāmoa because he is recognized as the principal ancestor of the ruling families of Sāmoa—the Mālietoa. (The current head of state in Sāmoa is Mālietoa Tanumafili II.) One legend claims that Pili, lizard son of the great god Tagaloa, came down to earth and fell in love with Sinaleana, daughter of a great high chief. From their union were born four sons, Tua, 'Ana, Saga, and Tolufalo (the last two were twins), and these brothers became the ancestors of the ruling families of Sāmoa.

A more detailed legend claims that Pili was the lizard son of Loa and Sina, who lived in the beautiful bay at Fagaloa, located on the northeastern shore of the island of 'Upolu. Pili had a sister, also named Sina, whom he loved deeply. Word of Sina's beauty traveled extensively throughout the Pacific islands until it reached the ears of Tuifiti (the king of Fiji). Tuifiti came to Fagaloa and courted Sina until she agreed to return with him to Fiji to be his wife. Pili, however, became distraught that his sister might leave him, so he pleaded to go with her. Of course, Pili was a big, black lizard, one not likely to be accepted by outsiders, so Pili shrunk himself so that Sina could hide him inside her pocket.

The return to Fiji lasted far longer than anticipated, and the party soon ran out of food. Tuifiti and his crew became so famished that they decided to cook and eat Sina as a "kava snack." Pili, however, heard their plans and showed Sina where some food had been hidden on the boat. Fortunately, Sina was saved for the time being, but the same event repeated itself and Pili once again came to Sina's rescue. (Of course, the food had materialized as the result of Pili's magical powers.) Tuifiti's crew finally realized what had happened and surmised that Pili possessed demonic powers, which they believed were evil in intent. They also convinced Sina of the fact, and, in disgust, she threw Pili overboard. Pili, however, was rescued by his two bird brothers Fuialaiō (starling) and Maomao (honey sucker), who had been sent by their father, Loa.

Tuifiti, Sina, and crew finally made it to Fiji, and Pili himself eventually landed on the island, but he never revealed himself to his sister. As time passed, famine again stalked Fiji, and food became scarce in all the islands except those gardens owned by Pili. Again, Sina's life was in danger as people were captured and cooked for food. Once more, Pili came to his sister's rescue. His magical *palai* (yam plants) grew so luxuriously that they made their way over to Sina's property. While desperately digging for food, Sina came upon *palai*, and day after day she dug the tubers and offered them to her husband, the king. Prosperity finally returned to Fiji once again. As Sina continued to dig for yams, she eventually reached her brother's plantations, and the two were reconciled. Later, Pili left his sister, ascended to heaven, and ultimately settled to the island of Manu'a.

Another story claims that Pili visited the various Samoan islands, where he aided the people in their fishing and agriculture. He eventually settled down on 'Upolu, where he married the daughter of high chief Tui Ā'ana, and they became the parents of four sons whose names were mentioned above. After many years, the four sons and their families went their separate ways so that they might find adequate living space. Three of the sons settled on different parts of 'Upolu, which eventually became its important districts—Tua founded Ātua, 'Ana founded Ā'ana, and Saga founded Tuamāsaga. Tolufalo, however, traveled westward and founded the island of Savai'i. Not long after that, however, a disagreement broke out between the brothers, and that resulted in what is known in Samoan history as the "War of the Brothers," a rivalry that continued down into historic times.

**See also** Cannibalism and Human Sacrifices; Hina; Land; Monsters; Sisimatalaia'a; Tangaloa

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## PLANTS (FOOD)

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Because of the warm, tropical climate and the rich, fertile soil of the Pacific islands, most Polynesians had an abundant supply of plant food; the precise number of different plants, however, was actually limited. Of course, small, rain-free islands and low-rising atolls produced no food at all, and as a result, these generally remained uninhabited. There were a few indigenous plants on the Pacific





*Illustration 3.35: Hawaiian taro (kalo) plants, whose leaves can be cooked similar to spinach and whose tuber roots are cooked and pounded into poi. (Larry Craig)*

islands before the Polynesian arrived, but most of the food plants were brought with them in their migrations across the Pacific. Staple foods in the Polynesian diet consisted of primarily breadfruit, taro, sweet potatoes, yams, arrowroot, sugarcane, coconuts, bananas, plantains, the tī plants, Tahitian chestnuts, and turmeric. The less tropical climates of Easter Island and New Zealand would not allow the widespread cultivation of the coconut and breadfruit trees, and some islands preferred one of the staple foods over another.

According to Polynesian mythology, most plants were created in the beginning by the gods. In New Zealand, it was Tāne who created them. In Tahiti, the god Ta'aroa arose from his shell and shook off his feathers, and where they fell, they created the greenery of the earth. But after that first creation, Polynesian myths tell us that many new plants sprang into existence by growing from the bodies of the gods and goddesses or that certain deities were turned into plants. In Hawai'i, for example, the *kalo* (taro; see Illustration 3.35) grew from the embryonic child of Papa and Wākea, and the edible 'ōhelo berries (*Vaccinium reticulatum* and related to the cranberry family) found on the volcanic mountains

grew from the body of Pele's sister Ka'ōhelo. We are also told that one of the sisters of the wind god Makani-ke'ōē was turned into the 'ie'ie plant (*Freycinetia arborea*) and the other into the sweet-scented *kiele* (gardenia) blossoms found on the slopes of the mountains. Additional examples could be cited.

Other plants, they say, grew from the bodies of certain noble human beings who died and were buried. The best example comes from Tahiti, where a father gave up his life to save his starving family. From his grave grew the stately breadfruit tree (see the "Breadfruit, Origin of" entry earlier in this chapter). In Tonga, a leprous daughter of poor parents was sacrificed to provide food for Loau, a visiting high chief. From her head grew the sacred kava plant, and from her intestines the sweet sugarcane.

Another category of myths tells stories of how humans traveled to the underworld and brought back certain foods they obtained from the gods. A clever one is told of the Hawaiian trickster Ka'ulu who, when born, assumed the shape of a rope because of the jealousy of an older brother. After he had grown up and had assumed human form, his kind brother, Ka'eha, was kidnapped and taken away up into the heavens. In desperation, Ka'ulu set out to rescue him. He encountered many obstacles along his path, but he succeeded in vanquishing them all. Once in heaven, he played several tricks on the gods, one of which was the theft of all of their food plants. He visited the gods' vegetable patch and tricked the guard into letting him have "all that he could carry." Without knowing Ka'ulu's physical powers, the guard gave him his permission just to get rid of the pest. Consequently, Ka'ulu gathered up every plant he found and returned to earth. When the unfortunate gods found out what had happened, they were forced to beg Ka'ulu for starts of each plant in order to restock their own gardens!

In Sāmoa, a giant fisherman by the name of Losi was instructed by the god Tagaloa to deliver some fresh fish to the gods in heaven. Losi obeyed, but he laid a fish on the doorstep of each one of the gods. When they awoke the next morning and rushed out, they slipped and fell. Losi was amused, and in the melee, he gathered up some of the sacred taro cuttings and hid them in his loincloth. Even though he was thoroughly searched by the gods before he left, they did not find the taro. When Losi returned to earth, he planted the shoots and thus introduced taro among his fellow Samoans. Losi continued to be angry because of his bodily search in heaven, and in revenge, he gathered up a huge army of giants, invaded heaven, and defeated the gods at every turn. Victorious, the giants gathered up every exotic food known to the gods and brought cuttings back to earth. This is how the fruit trees and food plants came to Sāmoa.

There are several interesting Tongan tales of how four gods and one goddess visited Puluotu (the underworld) and how they brought back the first yams and

taro. (One legend maintains, however, that it was humans who performed the deed, and another suggests it was a mixture of three men and a goddess.) In the first story, four male gods—Haveatoke, Fakafuumaka, Haelefeke, and Lohi—reluctantly invited the goddess Faimalie to accompany them on a journey to Pulo-tu. Arriving on the beach, they secured their outrigger canoe and headed to the home of Hikule’o, goddess of the underworld. She was not there, so the visitors decided to hide themselves until she returned. One of the gods turned himself into an insect, another into a stone, and the others hid themselves in the ground. Hikule’o’s neighbors heard and smelled the foreigners and spent long hours trying to find them, but with no luck. Hikule’o returned and took up the search. She called in numerous experts, but still the visitors could not be found. Finally, Hikule’o called out to them to reveal themselves. They did, and the people of the underworld were astonished at such power.

Hikule’o ordered a kava plant to be prepared for a welcoming ceremony. When the kava root arrived, it was so enormous that it took twenty coconut trees to support it. Hikule’o then demanded that the visitors drink the entire bowl of kava. If they could not, they would be slain. This was their punishment for entering her domain without her permission. The four gods wept, for they knew they could not drink the kava. The old goddess Faimalie sat silent. The four gods could only drink one cup each. Hikule’o demanded that Faimalie drink, whereupon, Faimalie not only drank the huge bowl of kava, but also ate the bowl and all of the twenty coconut trees. Nothing was left. Hikule’o was furious at her defeat and ordered everyone in Pulo-tu to cook yams, taro, and pigs and bring them to her. An enormous pile of food lay before them. Again Hikule’o demanded that if the visitors could not eat the food, they would be killed. Similar to the kava, the four gods could only eat a portion, whereupon Faimalie not only finished the entire amount, but she also ate the baskets, ropes, and the other paraphernalia used in cooking the food in the underground ovens.

Once more, Hikule’o was angry and demanded that they enter into several competitive games. Again, if the visitors did not win, they would be slain. The first competition was surfing. Time and time again, the god Haveatoke and a champion from the underworld swam out and caught the huge waves to shore. Finally, Haveatoke grabbed his rival by the back of the neck and killed him. Haveatoke surfed to the shore and was declared the winner. The second sporting competition was underwater diving, and the one to hold his breath the longest was the winner. In this case, the god Fakafuumaka entered the competition, and the two competitors dived under the waves. Both remained for over a month until Fakafuumaka’s competitor gave out and began to swim to the surface. Fakafuumaka grabbed him, however, and held him under the water until he drowned. Then Fakafuumaka emerged from the ocean, the winner.

The final competition was picking and eating all of the fruit from the enormous *vī* (mango) tree without allowing any fruit to fall to the ground. (See Illustration 3.36.) This time, the god Haelefeke came forward, spread himself out under the mango tree, gathered up all the limbs together, shook the tree, and caught all the fruit. But it was the goddess Faimalie again who saved the day. She finished all the fruit and then ate all of the leaves and limbs of the tree. Hikule'o became so furious that she ordered the visitors to leave and never to come back again. The five departed, but not until after Faimalie had secretly swallowed a whole yam and Lohi had stolen some taro and had hidden it on his person. When they reached the upper world, they retrieved and planted the starts of the yam and taro. This, they say, was the origin of the best yams and taro in Tonga.



*Illustration 3.36: A tree full of delicious, ripe mangoes.*  
(© Ian Maguire UF/IFAS/TREC)

**See also** Breadfruit, Origin of; Coconut, Origin of the; Kava; Ti Plant; Underworld

**Suggested Reading:**

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## PLEIADES (MATARIKI)

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

The Polynesian word Matariki (Makali'i, Makaliki, Mataliki, etc.) is known throughout most of Polynesia, and in almost all cases it has some connection to a popular constellation in the sky we call the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters. On

Mangaia in the Cook Islands, one legend maintains that originally Matariki was the brightest star in the heavens. This enraged both Aumea (the star Aldebaran) and Mere (the star Sirius) because if it weren't for Matariki, they would be the two most dazzling stars in the universe. Finally, the great god Tāne joined Aumea and Mere in their anger, and together they set out to destroy Matariki. Fearing for his life, Matariki fled and hid in a nearby stream. Mere finally reached the stream and drained off all of its waters. Matariki was again vulnerable, and the pursuit began once more. Tāne conceived a plan. He gathered up Aumea in his arms, hurled him at Matariki, and broke him into six shining splinters. The splinters formed a cluster of stars the Polynesians called the Matariki (little eyes). In several of the northern Cook Islands, Matariki was worshiped as one of their major gods until the introduction of Christianity in the 1850s.

In Hawai'i, Makali'i was an expert in star lore and, as a result, became the chief navigator for Hawai'i's most famous explorer Hawai'i-loa. Makali'i eventually settled on the island of Kaua'i and became the progenitor of the common people. His expertise in agriculture led the Hawaiians to name a month after him (December/January) and to refer to the Pleiades as *na kōkō a Makali'i* (the net of Makali'i) because the constellation resembled a fine mesh net in which Makali'i carried his plants.

The constellation also holds an important place in Polynesian astronomical calculations. Its first appearance on the eastern horizon at sunset (usually late November or early December) marks the beginning of a new year.

**See also** Calendar; Hawai'i-loa; Migrations; Stars; Sun God; Tāne

**Suggested Reading:**

Beckwith, Martha. *Hawaiian Mythology*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940, pp. 363–368.

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## **PRIESTS**

Cultural Group: Tonga and Tahiti

Humans who receive and interpret messages from the gods and who persuade the various spirits or gods to comply with human desires or wants are called priests. In ancient Polynesia, the character, duties, and status of priests ranged from one end of the spectrum to the other. At one end were the Tongan *tohunga*, who constituted no special class and who could not be distinguished from the rest of society, and at the other were the Tahitian priests, who had extensive education, wore identifiable clothing, held prestigious status, and who performed a wide variety of religious duties within the community.

Tongan priests came from the *matāpule* (attendant or servant) class within their society. When not functioning in a priestly role, the Tongan priest could not be distinguished from anyone else, and there was no special group set apart specifically for priestly functions. A description of how Tongan priests functioned might clarify this. When a chief wanted to know the outcome (future) of a certain predicament, he would call his subordinate chiefs and their *matāpule* to convene in a sacred house dedicated to a certain god. They would sit in a kava circle according to rank, and after appropriate ceremonies, the gathering would grow quiet and wait for the god to speak. The god would appear to enter into one of the *matāpule* and make himself known by speaking through him in a low, distinctive voice. This speaker was now considered a priest, and he would often deliver his message in a calm manner. On other occasions, he would exhibit strange physical contortions—twisted facial features, trembling body, tears, ponderous breathing, and/or blackened lips—accompanied with heavy perspiration and other strange symptoms. During the séance, other members of the *matāpule* would direct questions to the priest for him to respond. Once the séance was over, the priest returned to his natural position as well as his normal status in society. He was never given any special recognition because of his experience since anyone in the kava circle might have become so possessed. Should any prophecy not be fulfilled, it was never the fault of the priest but that of the deity who had inspired the message. Polynesian gods were infallible, and they had every right to change their minds.

Of course, certain *matāpule* became proficient in receiving messages from the gods. As a result, their advice was often sought after, and they frequently were chosen to be the negotiators of peace between warring groups in the islands. They also were chosen to be the caretakers of the houses dedicated to specific gods, and often their positions were inherited by their oldest sons.

The situation in Tahiti was much different. There, the *tahu'a* (priests) were full-time constituents of an elite and high-ranking social group, whose members were highly trained, educated, and revered. Schools were built for their training, and only well-formed and handsome young men from the chiefly (*ari'i*) class were chosen as students. After an arduous education and apprenticeship, the young men became members of a highly ranked fraternity of *tahu'a* who were responsible for the maintenance of the elaborate religious structures called the *marae*, in which solemn religious ceremonies were held. A highly respected *tahu'a* might eventually be chosen as a *tahu'a-nui*, or high priest, and he would then preside over several *marae* around the island. Several high priests might be found on a single island, and they too were ranked according to seniority and effectiveness. The most powerful high priest was chosen by the chief or king to advise him in all religious matters.





*Illustration 3.37* Copy of a nineteenth-century drawing showing various weapons, costumes, and artifacts from Polynesia. The central item is a Tahitian priest's or warrior's gorget, worn over the chest and made with an elaborate sennit base over which feathers, animal teeth, and hair are attached. (Ratzel, Friedrich, *The History of Mankind*, by Friedrich Ratzel. Translated from the second German edition by A. J. Butler with an introduction by E. B. Taylor. Volume 1. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1896. From "Polynesian Weapons and Costume," pp. 154–155.)

The *tahu'a* conducted prayers within the *marae*; they delivered religious speeches, chanted war songs to inspire warriors, acted as peace negotiators, carried out rituals to protect individuals from witchcraft, offered prayers for successful fishing, and forecasted the future by reading the various phenomena in the sky. Payment for their services was primarily offerings of food—baked fish, hogs, and breadfruit—as well as fine mats, tapa cloth, and colorful feathers. At the annual First-Fruits Ceremony, the priests received their portion of the gifts before anyone else, including the chiefs. These annual festival offerings to the gods provided the *tahu'a* with a plentiful supply of "wealth" for their maintenance.

The dress of the *tahu'a* was simple. It consisted of merely a loin-cloth, because coolness was liked by the gods, but on certain public occasions, a gorget was worn around the neck (see Illustration 3.37). It consisted of a colorful shoulder cape, fringed with feathers, that reached down to the waist. A headdress made of decorated white tapa cloth was sometimes worn. High priests wore a distinguishing yellow loin-cloth that set them apart from the others.

One interesting class of Tahitian priest was called the *'orero*. An *'orero* was a highly educated spokesman who delivered most of



the public prayers, speeches, chants, benedictions, and invocations. He had to perform these intricate and lengthy chants without hesitation and without error. To err might cost him his life. The *‘orero* usually inherited his important position from his father, from whom he had learned his skill. Once Christianity had been introduced into the islands, the position, of course, became extinct. In 1998, however, emphasis was once more placed upon this ancient art form when the annual Heiva i Tahiti (the annual dance festival) added “chanting” to its repertoire of national competition. The judges honor the winner by awarding him the prestigious title of best *‘orero* for the year.

**See also** Arioi Society; Chiefly Class; God Images; Kava; Mana; Omens and Superstitions; Schools of Education; Sorcery; *Tapu*; Temples

**Suggested Reading:**

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## RANGI AND PAPA

Cultural Group: New Zealand

The tragic love story of Rangi (Sky Father) and Papa (Earth Mother) is undoubtedly the most beloved story of the New Zealand Māori, and certain elements of it have already been discussed in chapter 2. Rangi and Papa were the source of all living things—gods and goddesses, the heavens, the earth and its greenery, all animals, and, of course, human beings. Rangi and Papa themselves were the children of the pō (darkness), which had been created out of kore (chaos), and they lay together in a tight and loving embrace (see Illustration 3.38). Children gods and goddesses were born to their union, but for ages they lived only in darkness, for light had never broken between the couple.

Tired of their narrow existence, six of the most important gods finally held a council to see what could be done. Tū-matauenga, the fiercest of all his brothers, spoke up first and proposed that they slay their parents in order to separate them; however, Tāne-mahuta, the god of the forests, proposed that they only force them apart—father Rangi pushed to the skies above and mother Papa left close below to be their nurturing mother. Eventually five of the brothers agreed to the separation. Only Tāwhiri-mātea, the god of the winds and storms, objected to such a dastardly act, for he grieved to think of the separation of his loving parents.

The next task was the actual job of separating their parents. Each god in turn rose up and attempted to separate them—Rongo-ma-tane, the god of cultivated



*Illustration 3.38: A wood carving from the front of a storehouse in New Zealand depicting the Māori gods Rangi (sky father) and Papa (earth mother) as a copulating couple. In Māori myth they were finally separated from their embrace only by the intervention of their son Tāne, god of the forests. (Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)*

food; Tangaroa, god of fish and reptiles; Haumia-tikitiki, god of food plants—but they all failed. Finally, Tāne-mahuta, the god of the forests, placed his head against Mother Earth, and with his feet against Father Sky, he strained and pushed them apart. Rangi and Papa cried out and moaned as they were separated, but Tāne did not stop until Rangi had been pushed far up into the heavens. Light poured into the realm of darkness, and for the first time, the whole of Rangi's and Papa's creations could be seen.

Meanwhile, Tāwhiri-mātea, angry for what had happened, fled to father Rangi for safety, and there he devised a plan for revenge. He created many children—all types of clouds, winds, thunderstorms, lightning, hurricanes, squalls, and whirlwinds. With all these "weapons," Tāwhiri-mātea declared war upon his brothers. Tāne and his forests were the first to feel the force of Tāwhiri's wrath. His terrible blast of hurricanes snapped Tāne's trees like they were tooth picks. He then turned on Tangaroa and all of his children, who fled to safety—some to the ocean and some inland.

Rongo-ma-tane and Haumia-tikitiki were next, but mother Papa hid them safely within her bosom. Finally, Tū-matauenga was the only one standing; his brothers had deserted him. Tāwhiri's forces were no match against Tū, and the two brothers called a truce. Tū, however, was furious that his other brothers fled and left him alone to fight Tāwhiri's forces. He now plotted revenge. He gathered up his forces, sought after his brothers, and devoured them. Only two major gods remained—Tū and Tāwhiri—and quiet once more settled over the earth. But the earth had changed. The violent storms, rains, and hurricanes had submerged a

good portion of mother earth, and as a result, only a small portion of it remained above water. The beings that survived the separation and family violence multiplied and increased upon the earth. Tū had numerous progeny, some of whom became ancestors to many of the heroes and demigods of New Zealand.

Father Rangi was forced to be content with his lot and place in the heavens, being forever separated from his wife, Papa. Yet his love continues down to this day. His tears of love fall in the form of dew and rain upon the forests and lands of Papa, while her warm sighs from her bosom ascend to Rangi in the form of mists from her beautiful lakes, mountains, and valleys. So sorrowful were their moans and cries in the separation that eventually Papa had to be turned over so that the two lovers would never have the pain of facing each other ever again.

**See also** Earthquakes; Kāne; Tāne; Tangaloa; Wākea

**Suggested Reading:**

Grey, George. *Polynesian Mythology*. New York: Taplinger Press, 1970, pp. 1–11.

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## RATA OR LAKA

Cultural Area: All of Polynesia, but especially Eastern Polynesia

Polynesians consider the legendary Rata as the most daring and successful seafaring navigator ever to have lived and as one of the four most renowned demigods of all times, the others being Māui, Tahaki, and Tinirau. Māui's reputation and exploits are so well known, it is surprising that Polynesians would even dare place Rata before that clever hero, but they do. The epic poems that detail Rata's exploits are especially lengthy in New Zealand, Hawai'i, Tahiti, and the Tuamotus, where they relate not only his adventures but those of his celebrated father and grandfather as well. These three generations (Kui, Vahivero, and Rata; or Tahaki, Vahieroa, and Rata) are so famous that the royal houses of Hawai'i, Tahiti, and Rarotonga claim the whole group in their genealogical pedigrees (see Figure 3.2).

Considered the longest, the Tuamotuan epic recounts first the genealogy of Rata and the exploits of his grandfather, then the abduction of Rata's parents to the underworld, and finally the remarkable canoe voyage of Rata to rescue his parents. The legend tells us that the demigod Kui, the grandfather of Rata, possessed great magical powers and dwelled in a land called Vavau-nui in Havaiki. He passed much of his time fishing and planting, but one day he noticed that someone had been eating his tubers. He lay in wait for two nights and finally caught the culprit. It was a female goblin named Rimahoro, whom he took home and with whom he had two children—a daughter, Rimapoto, and a son, Rimaroa. Rimahoro eventually became homesick and decided to return to her home in Ko-

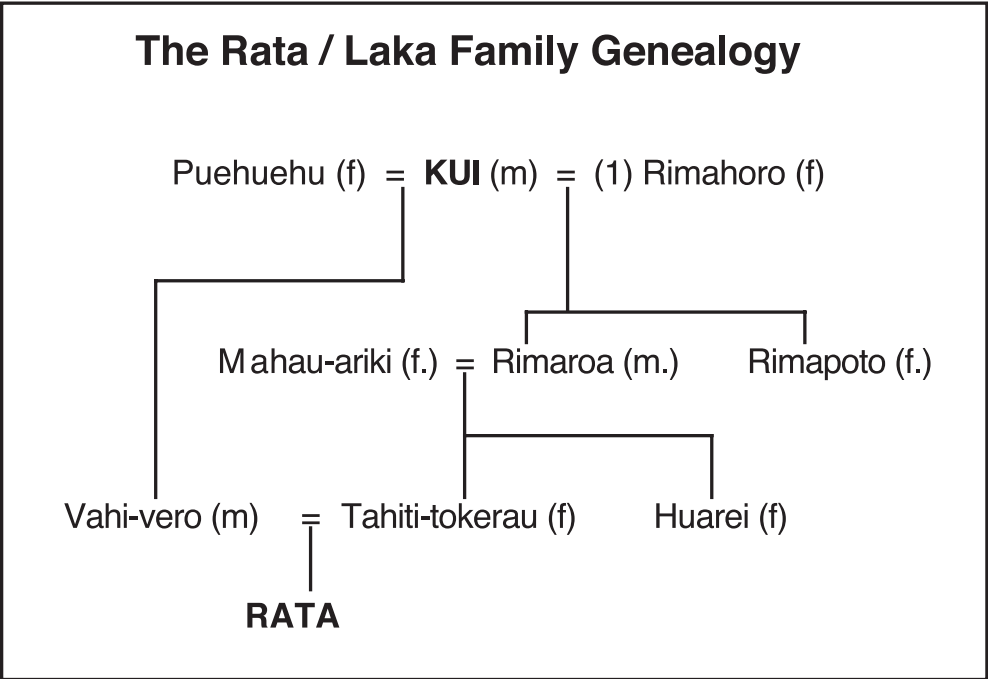


Figure 3.2: Three generations of the Kui-Rata family genealogy.

rorupo (the netherworld). She took her daughter, Rimapoto, with her, and she left her young son, Rimarora, with Kui to rear. When Rimarora became a young man, he set out to visit his mother in Kororupo, where he fell in love with a lovely water nymph, the Princess Mahau-ariki. Together they had a beautiful daughter named Tahiti-tokerau, who was a water nymph like her mother and who would later become the mother of the great voyager Rata. Rimarora never returned to his father in Vavau-nui but lived in Kororupo until his death.

Meanwhile back in Vavau-nui, Kui had taken another wife, the Princess Puehuehu, who gave birth to four children, the last being a son named Vahi-vero, who was especially loved by his father. One day Kui took the small boy fishing, but when he left him on the beach alone, two huge birds swooped down and abducted the young boy and carried him off to Hiva-ro-tahi, where he was placed under the watchful eye of two witches—Nua and Mere-hau. Vahi-vero's parents were devastated, and during the night, a voice came to Princess Puehuehu in a dream that told her what had happened to her son. The next morning Puehuehu told her husband Kui what she had heard. He immediately climbed a tall coconut tree, snared the two thieving birds as they flew overhead, and forced them to swear they would return his son. Released, the birds flew away, but were not heard from again. A year passed, and finally Kui decided to visit Hiva-ro-tahi himself.

Kui's seafaring journey to Hiva-ro-tahi was wrought with dangers, but Kui's reputation as a great voyager went before him. Guided first by a flying fish and then a billfish, Kui finally made it to the netherworld of the two witches. They saw him coming and sent seven monstrous waves toward his ship in the hopes of crashing it to the bottom of the sea. Kui, however, used his ingenuity, sailed through each one of the walls of water, and successfully landed on the beach. A wrestling fight began, and Kui threw the two witches far out into the sea, where his billfish snatched them up and carried them back home to Vavau-nui. Kui then searched the island and finally found his son asleep in a privy, where the two birds had imprisoned him. He cleaned his son up and then summoned his billfish to carry them both back home. On his way, Kui captured the two devious birds and brought them home to be eaten in a great feast in honor of his successful return. The two witches, however, were granted a stay of execution after having successfully entertained Kui's gathered guests, but they were forever forbidden to leave the island.

Years passed, and Vahi-vero became a gifted young man through the careful tutelage of his father. One day Vahi-vero trekked inland, where he came upon Tahiti-Tokerau, a water nymph and none other than his half-brother's daughter, bathing in a lovely pool of water. He became infatuated with her beauty and rushed home to tell his father of his "find." He proclaimed that her cheeks were like the gleaming rays of the moon, and her hair was like the lustrous black feathers of the male frigate bird, and as for her eyes, they were like the eyes of the dove. Kui was pleased and told his grandson how to capture the water nymph. Vahi-vero returned to the pool, followed his grandfather's instructions, and caught Tahiti-tokerau. Frightened, she swore that if he let her go and returned home, she would come back and be his wife. The deal was made and Tahiti-Tokerau left.

Vahi-vero waited and waited, but Tahiti-Tokerau never returned. Finally, Kui surmised that King Puna of the netherworld must have abducted her during her voyages, and Kui instructed his son how he could rescue his lovely fiancée. Vahi-vero set out, dove down into the pool where he first met Tahiti-Tokerau, reached the land of Puna, and rescued her. Shortly thereafter, Puna discovered that he had been deceived and swore revenge. Upon returning to Vavau-nui, Vahi-vero and Tahiti-Tokerau became husband and wife. Tahiti-Tokerau soon became pregnant, and she delivered a son, whom they named Rata. Meanwhile, Puna gathered up all his powerful forces and set out to seek his revenge. On the beach at Vavau-nui, he came upon Vahi-vero and Tahiti-Tokerau, who were gathering food for their young son, who was home with his grandfather. Puna summoned up his savage shark Matuku-tagotago and all of his supporting demons. The huge shark seized Vahi-vero, bit off his head, and swallowed him

whole. The other demons seized Tahiti-Tokerau, plucked out her eyes, and took her back to Kororupo, where they buried her in the ground head first with her feet turned up to serve as supports on which her younger sister, Huarei, now mistress to King Puna, could hang her baskets.

Now orphaned, baby Rata was left to be reared by his grandfather, who told the young boy as he grew up that he had no parents. One day while Rata was playing with his companions, who were losing the game, they began to taunt him about his parents. They harangued Rata that his father had been eaten by a shark and that his mother's legs were being used for basket supports near a latrine. Rata was furious and forced his grandfather to tell him the true story of his parents. Upon hearing his account, Rata decided to avenge his parents and sought counsel from Kui, who told him that he had to build a large canoe in order to sail to the netherworld to rescue his parents. The next day, Rata headed into the forest, found a suitable tree, and felled it swiftly by using Kui's magical axe. When he returned the next day to begin hollowing out the trunk of the tree, to his amazement, he found the tree upright. Rata felled the tree once more, layed a trap that evening, and snared two elves (Tavaka and Togo-hiti) who had returned to upright the tree once again. They pleaded that if Rata released them, they would agree to finish his canoe in one night with the aid of Kui's magical axe. Rata agreed and returned home to dream of his new voyaging canoe. Sure enough, the next morning, Rata's magnificent canoe was delivered to him, accompanied by a myriad of elves, gods, and goddesses, and after the proper dedication, prayers, and sacrifices, Rata set out on his journey to find King Puna.

Rata, however, was not alone. Tavaka, Togo-hiti, and their numerous invisible goblins friends and deities accompanied him and spurred him on his way, while his grandfather assumed the form of a bird and from high above guided the ship ever onward. Not too long into their journey, Rata encountered his first challenge. He happened upon a famous warrior named Manukura, who had just returned from King Puna's lands where he had just won Puna's daughter (Te Pupura-o-te-tai) in a competitive sports match against the king himself. Rata became enraptured with the young princess and asked Manukura to give her to him. The negotiations ended in a competition over the length of their loincloths, the winner receiving the "prize." Both young warriors used their magical powers, but those of Rata were far superior to those of Manukura. After winning the competition, Rata agreed, however, that Manukura could take the princess home and satisfy his lust for her, while all along Rata was conniving how to abduct the young princess out from under the very eyes of Manukura. Manukura arrived home and called for the young princess. Meanwhile, Rata landed on the

island, magically changed his physical features to disguise himself, and volunteered to take the young girl to Manukura. En route, however, Rata abducted the young princess and took her back to his homeland, where he placed her in the charge of his grandfather. Once again, he set out on the journey to avenge the death of his father and mother.

As the canoe and its entourage neared King Puna's island, demon monsters, guarding the island, rose up against them. First the monster shark Matuku-tagotago tried to swallow the entire ship. Tavaka, however, rushed to the prow of the ship, and after having impaled the shark with his magical spear, brought it on deck and opened its stomach, where they found the various parts of Rata's father. One after another, the many demons attempted to thwart the mighty Rata, but all failed. Finally in desperation, Puna sent his most devastating obstacles—seven tidal waves—to prevent Rata's landing. Rata, however, used his grandfather's magical axe and chopped through each of the monstrous waves as they rushed toward the ship. Again using his magical axe, he hacked an entrance through the reef for his canoe and landed on the beach where King Puna was waiting for him.

They began their fighting by agreeing first to a girdle contest, and, of course, Rata's magical girdle wrapped round and round Puna many times, but Puna's would not encircle Rata even once. Then Puna proposed a fighting match using spears. The battle waged but ended in a draw, whereupon, Puna invited Rata to a sumptuous feast at his house. Rata believed, however, that the invitation was a guise to entrap him, so he sent his two goblins to thwart whatever plans Puna had devised. In disguise, the goblins joined Puna's servants, who went crabbing along the beach and then went with them to their sleeping quarters. Early before the sunrise, the two goblins crowed like roosters and caused the lizard guards to leave their posts at the entrance of the hut. Tavaka then entered the hut, threw a noose around Puna, and dragged him to the ship. Rata axed him to death and now was satisfied that at least his father had been revenged.

From the land of Puna, they set sail for Kororupo, where Rata's mother was being held captive. Rata landed and trekked inland, where he found his mother's insidious sister Huarei plaiting some fine house mats. He killed her with a spear, and then nearby he found his mother. He pulled her out of the ground, replaced her eyes, and they both embraced each other and wept for joy. During their voyage home to Vavau-nui, they encountered several obstacles, but they were minor because now the whole world had heard Rata's exploits and few dared challenge him. Arriving home, Rata and his family moved inland to a sacred valley called Ihu-gata, where he lived until his death, and thus ends the Tuamotuan story of Rata.



The epics from the other Polynesian islands may differ in detail, but in all of them, Rata (also known as Laka, Lasa, 'Aka, Raka) remains the illustrious canoe builder whose expertise in seafaring has never been surpassed. Some Polynesians still believe that Rata sails with them on their daily fishing trips out in the treacherous ocean in their small outrigger canoes. Others have seen him sail through the billowing, cumulus clouds in the heavens and have heard his chorus of goblins singing:

Rata! There is none like Rata.  
Rata! There is none like Rata.  
O bravely beating heart!  
Bravely beating heart like Ruanuku [god of armies],  
Ever seeking the destined land.  
Let the beloved assume his place.  
Let him stand proudly erect in his ship!  
Rata! There is none like Rata.  
Rata! There is none like Rata. (Luomala 1955, 178)

*See also* Hawaiki; Māui; Tahaki; Tinirau

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## RŪ

Cultural Group: Central Polynesia

The great explorer Rū is known throughout most of Central Polynesia (the Cook Islands and French Polynesia) as one of the greatest explorers of all times. So impressive were his adventures that several of the extant legends acknowledge him as one of the gods. One, for example, identifies him as the god Rū who, during the creation of the universe, separated the sky from the earth, and another identifies him as one of the supporters of the heavens. Although the Rū chants are relatively brief when compared to many of the other legends of heroes and demigods, the descriptions of his extensive travels throughout the Pacific are incredible.

One Tahitian chant, recorded in 1824, asserts that he indeed was the god responsible for separating the earth and sky. Some time later, he prepared a magnificent canoe, named *Te-Apori*, and with his goddess sister Hina set out to map out the world. (Although the English translation says “to circumnavigate the earth,” this perhaps was not the meaning of the original Tahitian. Unfortunately, we do not have the original.) Another chant suggests that the two set sail from New Zealand (called Te-Ao-Tea-Roa in the chant) and that they first gave names to the various geographical directions of the earth—south, north, east, west—as they traveled. (Notice that the Tahitians say south first and then north, just the opposite of English speakers.) Hina sat at the bow of the canoe and watched for new lands as Rū sat astern guiding *Te-Apori* with his sturdy paddles. The rhythmic sound of the chant along with the repetition of certain words and phrases give it a particularly haunting and melodic resonance, like the waves of the ocean lapping against the canoe. According to the chants, the specific islands they discovered are Te-Aotearoa (New Zealand); Bora Bora, Rā’iatea, Mo’orea, Tahiti, Maupiti, Mangareva, Tubuai, and Huahine in French Polynesia; Mangaia, Araura, and Aitutaki in the Cook Islands; Tutuila, ‘Upolu, and Savai’i in Sāmoa; Vavau in Tonga; the Marquesas Islands; and even “burning Hawai’i” to the north. The one-way distance from New Zealand to Hawai’i alone is 4,385 miles (7,057 kilometers), and Rū’s voyage represents a sailing feat unparalleled in any other part of the world during the same time period. (The distance from New Zealand to Tahiti is 2,542 miles [4,091 kilometers].)

One of the chants describes how Rū brought two hundred emigrant men, women, and children from Havai’i and found the island of Aitutaki in the Cook Islands. The island was so inviting that they settled and established their homes there. Seven of the original elders were appointed chiefs over them, and the people prospered and increased in number. Eventually, another group of settlers emigrated from a land called Western Havai’i, a land they say lay in the opposite direction than the originally Havai’i.

Today, there is a break in the reef on the island of Rā’iatea (north of Tahiti) called Te-Ava-o-Hina (The Passage of Hina), where the locals say that the explorer Rū and Hina entered the lagoon, anchored their canoe at Motutapu (sacred island), and came ashore. Not too far away also is the place where Hina supposedly beat her tapa cloth and the breadfruit tree on which she hung her tapas out to dry.

**See also** Hawai’i-loa; Hawaiki; Kupe and Turi; Māui; Migrations

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### SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION

Cultural Group: New Zealand and Tahiti

Prior to European contact in the late eighteenth century, Polynesians did not have a written language, and as a result, their storehouse of wisdom and knowledge had to be committed to memory and transmitted from one generation to another by word of mouth. Parents taught their children to plant, cook, and fish by example and explanation. More advanced knowledge, such as family genealogies; religious lore, chants, liturgies, and spells; astronomy; agricultural techniques; and above all mythology—the knowledge of the cosmos and the infinite stories of the gods and goddesses—required more than a casual approach to the subject. In almost all Polynesian societies, priests were usually the designated cultural bearers of this sacred knowledge, and they were attached to every court as advisors to the high chiefs. Priests learned their trade by being an apprentice to their predecessor; they jealously guarded their secrets and very seldom dispensed their valuable knowledge to anyone other than their designated trainee. There are two exceptions to this scenario, however; in New Zealand and Tahiti, formal schools of training were physically established in every district of the islands for the sole purpose of educating the next generation in the knowledge of the elders. In New Zealand the schools of mythology and religion were called *whare-kura* (“fah-ray-koo-rah”) and in Tahiti *fare-‘ai-ra‘a-upu* (“fah-ray-aye-rah-ah-oo-poo”), and they were intended primarily for future priests. Other less sacred schools existed for the teaching of more mundane subjects, such as agriculture, astronomy, and so forth, and these could be attended by anyone in the villages.

In New Zealand, the *whare-kura* were constructed and dedicated to provide an isolated place for the teaching of the sacred lore of mythology, religion, and history primarily to the sons of the priests. Only priests could build these structures, which then would be consecrated by the offering of a blood sacrifice of either a dog or human being. It was used for no other purpose than the teaching of sacred lore, which usually took place for approximately five months during the winter. Between twenty and thirty male students were chosen each year to begin their training. One female, however, was also designated for each class to help care for its needs. Fathers of the students attended to provide discipline and additional input on their knowledge of the various subjects. Elaborate ceremonies, consisting of various cleansings and incantations, began and ended the periods of training. Strict taboos were recognized during the period—there could be no sexual intercourse, no menial tasks such as food preparation and the collection of firewood, and no association with ordinary people.

The memorization classes began at sunset and ended at midnight; the priests in turn recited the various mythologies, incantations, liturgies, songs of

gods and heroes, and sacred lore over and over while the students listened intently, for they knew they would soon be brought forward to exhibit their knowledge on the subjects. After the evening's sessions, the participants slept from midnight until sunrise; their daily activities consisted of exercising, bathing, and practicing their newly acquired skills. Once the season was over, the school was closed with impressive ceremonies, and all returned to their villages until the following autumn. The normal length of training took four to five years, after which, the trainees were usually advanced to lower positions in the priesthood or were assigned as teachers.

Similar to the Māoris in New Zealand, the Tahitians erected two types of schools, the sacred schools called *fare-'ai-ra'a-upu* (houses to absorb incantations) and teaching schools called *fare-ha'api'ira'a* (houses of learning); both were erected on sacred grounds and found in almost every major district in the islands. The sacred schools were primarily for the sons of the priests, while the students in the teaching schools were both men and women. Candidates for the sacred schools were handpicked from the tallest and most able-bodied young men among the priests' families. The candidates would then withdraw themselves from their families and retire to the *fare-'ai-ra'a-upu*, where they were taught mythology, prayers, genealogies, war songs, astronomical signs, and incantations of all sorts. They often retired to deep caves in the valleys where they prayed and communed with their gods.

Upon completion of his training, the novice appeared before a select council of priests and recited the required answers to its many questions. If the student faltered or hesitated, he had to return to his training until he could pass the final oral exam without blemish. Knowing the extensive length of many of these genealogies and mythological chants, we can fully admire the extreme tenacity of these students. (We are told that some of the ancient chants took several days to relate.) In many respects, the process sounds similar to the university doctoral examinations of the European Middle Ages, when students were required to recite from memory long passages of texts from their extensive readings. After graduating with honors, the Tahitian student was then accepted into the fraternity of priests. His family prepared a tasty feast for the priests during which the candidate would arise and offer his first oration before that exalted group. He would then offer appropriate gifts to the gods upon the sacred altars of the *marae* (temple) and to his numerous teachers, after which he was accepted as a permanent member of the priesthood.

A less elaborate form of instruction was found in the Marquesas Islands. There, any father could build a special *mata oho au* (house of instruction) for his children and for any others (adults as well) who might like to participate. The father would hire a *tuhuna o'ono* (bard) who closely supervised the students for

approximately a month of vigorous instruction. Similar to practices in New Zealand and Tahiti, various *tapu* and strict codes of living were established for the duration. After the instruction was complete, the temporary building was razed and the bard returned to his home.

Schools in other Polynesian islands may have existed; however, the early explorers, missionaries, and historians failed to mention their presence. Nonetheless, it seems unlikely that similar means of instruction did not exist elsewhere.

**See also** Arioi Society; Chiefly Class; Genealogies; Mana; Omens and Superstitions; Priests; Storytelling and Chants; *Tapu*; Temples

**Suggested Reading:**

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## **SEX AND SEXUALITY**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Polynesia's reputation of uninhibited sexual pleasures spread widely after the first Western explorers and sailors visited the islands and returned to Europe. These first visitors to the islands reported that the Polynesians spent most of their time arranging, preparing for, or engaging in sexual activity. To some degree, that reputation survives into modern times. Certain areas of Polynesia are still regarded by outsiders as more free and more sexually open than many other parts of the world. Anthropologists are still drawn to the islands to examine this peculiar characteristic of Polynesian societies. A case in point, of course, is the famous research done by Margaret Mead in Sāmoa during the 1920s. Her conclusions regarding the promiscuity of Sāmoa's teenagers were published in her famous book *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1932).

Ancient Polynesians regarded sex as a natural and pleasurable activity, similar to that of eating and sleeping. They were not impeded from talking about it casually in their daily conversations, and they were frequently quite public in the indulgence of the act themselves. This sexual frankness is also reflected in their mythology. Cosmic creation, they say, came about as a result of the sexual union between male and female forces within the universe. Sky Father and Earth Mother, for example, lay in a sexual embrace that brought forth numerous progeny. One such progeny was the great god Tāne, who searched far and wide

for the right sexual partner before deciding to create the perfect one himself. The result, of course, was a mortal women, created out of clay from Earth Mother. Tāne had intercourse with her, and subsequently she gave birth to the first human man, named Tiki. Sexual acts are mentioned frequently in the legends of the other gods and heroes, and these legends make numerous references or allusions to male and female sexual organs. Sex was simply an eternal principle, and there was no shame in its performance or discussion. Some modern-day translators and analysts of these recorded legends have been far more modest and embarrassed in confronting this frankness, and as a result, they have simply dropped those passages from their discussion.

Although sexual intercourse among the ancient Polynesians was much freer than in Western societies, there were some noted exceptions. Generally, the higher the class of the female, the less free she was. Daughters of high chiefs, for example, were expected to marry within their own class, and they were expected to be virgins upon their wedding night. Some of the daughters were highly concealed, guarded, and protected until the marriage had been arranged. Wives of high chiefs were considered *tapu* by lower-class men, but there are many instances where high-ranking women lived separately from their chiefly husbands and had numerous lovers. Chiefs frequently had multiple wives and concubines (mistresses). In Tonga, for example, a chief's new wife was expected to bring her uncle's daughter as her new husband's concubine. Of course, there were no similar obligations on the part of the lower classes, whose marriages consisted merely of agreeing to live with one another. Divorce by either party of the union was simple. Husband or wife could simply pick up and move back to his or her own family without cause or discussion. Couples who had lived together longer would mutually agree regarding children and possessions before they separated.

The differences in male and female anatomy were learned very early because young children went naked until about the age of seven years. Knowledge of the sexual act came equally early, since there were no partitions in most of the sleeping quarters and since public exhibitions of sex often occurred during certain religious ceremonies and evening entertainment. It is reported that most young girls and boys had had several sexual encounters by the time they had turned eleven years of age. Since girls matured sooner than boys, most females were married at a younger age—usually just after puberty.

Homosexuality was looked upon with indifference, and in some cases it was actually encouraged. It is difficult to determine exactly how widespread the practice was in ancient times, but there are several references to it by the early explorers. They write that the practice occurred among all classes, and they know for a fact that the current kings indulged in it openly without the least bit of guilt or embarrassment. Another custom among the Polynesians was rearing

a young boy as a girl. From childhood, he lived, dressed, and acted as a woman and was called a *māhū*. Considered by society to be a woman, he had to abide by all the *tapu* normally associated with women. Some sources say that this practice was promoted because the family needed an older sister to care for the younger siblings. Other sources say that they were reared solely for the pleasure of the principal chiefs within the tribe. In any case, the writers agree that the *māhū* was generally “valued as a good friend, equally respected and esteemed.”

**See also** Arioi Society; Chiefly Class; Haumea; Kāne; Marriage; Rangi and Papa; Tāne

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## SHARKS

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Although sharks were greatly feared by most Polynesians, there were many islanders that worshipped them as family gods. Several even kept them as pets. Certain sharks were supposed to be possessed with the spirits of departed humans, and in these cases, the sharks never molested their family members when they came into contact with them. On occasion, it is said, these particular sharks even rescued their relatives who were lost at sea. They would carry them on their backs or in their jaws until they reached land.

In Tahiti, High Chief Moe, for example, had a pet shark he kept in a great hole in the coral reef. Although it was ferocious to all strangers, it knew and protected Chief Moe or any members of his family who might venture out to sea. Similar stores are told in Hawai‘i, where in 1923, for example, Annie Aiona told a story of a policeman and his wife who sailed from Māui to Moloka‘i on business. Once at sea, a storm capsized their boat, and the couple began to sink. The policeman prayed to any of his family gods that might be residing in the ocean to rescue them. Almost immediately, a great shark appeared and carried the couple safely to shore. Perhaps this was the famous Hawaiian shark Kane-i-kō-kala, who had the reputation of rescuing shipwrecked people and bringing them safely to shore.

In Tonga, a story is told of Seketoa, a young Tongan nobleman, who fled his home because of the threat of being murdered by his jealous older brother. Before leaving, however, he promised his people he would always be helpful to them. Reaching the seashore, he flung himself into the ocean and at that point,



the gods granted him immortality and turned him into a large shark. To this day, he swims the lagoons around his village protecting its inhabitants from the other monsters of the deep. He can be recognized by an old, white battle scar he carries on his side. True to his word, Seketua became famous for protecting his people and guiding their ships safely into port. Sightings of Seketua and his supernatural maneuverings were reported as late as the twentieth century.

In Hawaiian mythology, the most famous shark god is Ka-moho-ali'i, an elder brother to Pele, the volcano goddess, and king of all the sharks. He takes human form whenever he wishes (but always as a high chief), and a cliff overlooking the crater of Kīlauea (Pele's home) is sacred to him. They say that smoke and ash from Pele's crater never come near the cliff because even she fears his sacred power.

**See also** Fish, Battle of the; Monsters; Ocean; Pele (Pere)

**Suggested Reading:**

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## SISIMATAILA'A

Cultural Group: Tonga

The Tongan story of Sisimataila'a (Sisi of the sun face) reminds us of the Greek mythological story of Pandora's box. When opened, it brought all the ills of humanity into the world. Several versions of the legend of Sisimataila'a survive, but most of them agree regarding the main events in the story.

Sisimataila'a was the son of a mortal woman, Makamaka'a, who became pregnant from exposing herself to the sun, and Sisimataila'a matured into a handsome and brave young man without ever knowing his father. One day, the king of Tonga and his entourage planned a tour of all the islands in hopes of finding a suitable young man to marry his daughter Fatafehi, who remained at home. When the king arrived at the home of Makamaka'a and was introduced to Sisimataila'a, he immediately decided that the young man was to be his new son-in-law. A great feast was prepared and eaten, after which the party boarded the canoes to continue its tour of the islands. Everywhere they landed, the king debarked but gave instructions to Sisimataila'a that he must remain on board to guard the boats, for the king firmly believed that all the eligible young girls

would try to snatch Sisimataila'a from his intended bride. Sure enough, everywhere they went, the daughters of the reigning chiefs sought out Sisimataila'a and seduced him. Undaunted, however, the king continued his journey on to Sāmoa, and finally they reached home.

Once on shore, the king introduced Sisimataila'a to his young daughter, and the two took to each other immediately. Sisimataila'a informed the king, however, that before the wedding could take place, he had to return home to check on his mother and to inform her of his intended marriage. Upon arriving at home, Sisimataila'a found his mother deathly ill, but once she saw his face again, she revived. Sisimataila'a told her of his marriage plans and then pleaded with her to tell him about his father. She told him of her unusual pregnancy and that he was the son of the sun god La'a. When Sisimataila'a demanded to go see him, his mother told him that he would have to visit a certain old woman who lived far out to sea. Sisimataila'a sailed eastward until he arrived at the small island and met the old woman, who gave him instructions about visiting his father. Sisimataila'a sailed on to the sunrise, but failed to get there in time, so he had to wait until the next day to talk to his father. (Several versions say that he overslept several days before he had the opportunity of visiting his father at sunrise.) Sisimataila'a informed his father of his marriage to the king's daughter, whereupon, the sun told him to return to the old woman who had two bundles—one was called Monu (Lucky) and the other Mala (Unlucky). He warned him, however, that he was to take only one bundle—Monu—for his wedding gift.

Returning back to the old woman, Sisimataila'a's greed got the best of him, and he informed her that his father had given him both bundles as a wedding gift. The old woman was skeptical, and she warned him about ever opening the Mala (Unlucky) bundle. On his return home, Sisimataila'a could not resist. He opened the Mala bundle anyway, whereupon the heavens opened, a torrent of rain came down, and a violent hurricane swept him and his canoe back to the island. The old woman suspected what had happened. She scolded him and accepted the Mala bundle back. She then instructed him to continue home, to put the Monu (Lucky) bundle inside his new home, and to open it only when it was ever needed.

En route back to his intended bride, Sisimataila'a stopped at home and picked up his mother so she could attend the wedding feast and thereafter live near the new couple. The day of the wedding came, and the king's servants brought countless gifts that overflowed the couple's new home. Embarrassed, Sisimataila'a and his mother regretted that they had nothing to give in return, but then Sisimataila'a remembered his Monu bundle. He opened it, and immediately the whole place was filled with pigs, kava, yams, and every delectable food imaginable. His reputation and prestige were saved, and the couple went

straight away and were married. After much feasting and entertainment, all the guests returned back to their homes.

An interesting variant maintains that the young couple took the two bundles from the old woman, and on the way home, the young bride opened Mala and such a mass of goods came out of the bundle that the vessel sank from the weight of it, and the couple was drowned.

*See also* Marriage; Plants (Food); Sun God

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## SORCERY

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Sorcery or black magic existed in every island group throughout Polynesia. Sorcery, or necromancy, is the art of gaining the assistance of evil spirits for the purposes of causing revenge upon one's enemies, revealing the future, or influencing the course of human events. Polynesian sorcerers were frequently members of the priestly class, but more often they were a class set apart, highly respected and feared by most of the community. In Tahiti, these specialists were called kindlers from the designation *feia tahutahu* (*feia* meaning a group of people, and *tahu* meaning to kindle a fire). In many of the other island groups, they were just referred to as priests (*kahuna*, *tahunga*, etc.) who held supernatural powers.

The sorcerer performed his magical powers through the use of a "fetcher." Fetchers were small human-like statues, fashioned out of stone or wood, which would serve as a dwelling place for the malevolent spirit or ghost conjured up by the sorcerer. A kindler could own several different fetchers, which he carefully protected by placing them in a small house-like structure built on stilts high off the ground. The kindler would spend hours on end in the house caring and praying to the statues as if they were his own children. The kindler would arrange various seashells among his fetchers through which they could verbally communicate.

The specific ceremony of the kindler would proceed as follows. A client would appear before the sorcerer requesting some particular deed he wanted performed. He would bring some personal items from the intended victim to be used in the actual ceremony, such as some hair, nail clipping, droppings of food, a piece of clothing, and so forth. These personal belongings contained a certain amount of the victim's "essence" and provided a necessary link between the ceremony being performed and the victim. The sorcerer would then place these personal items in a closed container made of stone or wood and arrange them upon the altar among his fetchers. The kindler would then offer prayers to invite his spirits

into the statues to hear his petition. In most cases, the kindler would request that the malevolent spirit enter into the victim's body and destroy it. Theoretically, the spirit would then enter the body and attack its internal organs. The destruction of the organs would result in the victim running a high fever, writhing about in agony, foaming at the mouth, and eventually dying. Sometimes, however, the kindler wished only to gain information from the victim or have the victim act in a certain manner. In these cases, a type of hypnosis would overcome the victim, and the spirit would gain what was needed and then depart.

Realizing that such black magic might befall them from time to time, Polynesians were extremely careful to make sure that any of their personal items did not fall into their enemy's hands. They were also careful to offer up prayers for protection to their own personal gods on a regular basis. Should an individual have suspected that he was being threatened by black magic, he would have sought out a specialist who would have diagnosed whether or not he was being threatened. The specialist would have determined what actions were required, and if it was sorcery, the victim would have needed to offer up certain prayers and sacrifices to a particular god to thwart the power of his opponent. If it did not work, it was known that bribes could frequently be accepted on the part of the opposing kindler.

Sorcerers were highly paid for their services, especially if they were successful. Those whose reputations became renowned throughout the islands were often employed in the courts of the various high chiefs. Many of them exhibited supernatural powers. It is said that one Māori sorcerer by the name of Papahurihia, who had descended from a long line of witches and wizards, could transport himself from place to place through the air in a split second. He could also make himself invisible and conjure up spirits from the underworld to converse with their living relatives. Other remarkable tales have been recorded. The sorcerer Kiki, they say, wielded such power that his shadow could cause a plant to wither and die when he passed in front of it. In more modern times, one of the last pagan priests in New Zealand was Chief Te Heuheu, who was visited by Anglican Bishop George Selwyn (1809–1878) for the purpose of trying to convert him to Christianity. Te Heuheu demanded a miracle from the bishop, but the bishop refused his request. Te Heuheu demonstrated the power of his ancient gods by throwing a dead, brown leaf up in the air. When it fell upon the ground, it had turned alive and green again. The bishop left the meeting without having converted the great Māori chief.

**See also** Elves and Fairies; Ghosts; *Menehune*; Monsters; Priests; Underworld

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## STARS

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Although the stars played a major role in Polynesian oceangoing navigation and time reckoning, there is little mythological information regarding their creation and placement in the heavens. They are said to have been created along with the sun and moon by Rangi, Sky Father, but it was the god Tāne who gathered them together and permanently affixed them to the breast of his father as a beautiful ornamentation. Polynesians referred to the stars as little suns, and they were placed in the care of their elders—the sun and the moon. Because of their wanderings among the constellations and because they did not twinkle, five of the stars were recognized as planets—Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn—and were called wandering stars. The rest of the stars were collectively called trembling stars, and they were placed together in constellations in the heavens. The brighter stars were considered “noble,” and the lesser stars “common.” The Milky Way was called the flying cloud, the flying fish, or the fish of Māui.

Most of the major stars in the night sky were named, and some were grouped together into constellations. A good number of these are located in the southern hemisphere and are, therefore, unknown in the north. Some of the most important ones to the Polynesians were the Pleiades (see the “Pleiades (Matariki)” entry in this chapter), Orion’s Belt, Antares (the brightest star in Scorpio), Centaurus (a southern constellation between the Southern Cross and Hydra), Canopus (a bright star in the constellation Carina, not visible north of 37 degrees latitude), and Sirius (the bright Dog Star in the constellation Canis Major). A beautiful woman was flattered when she was referred to as “the star Venus flashing along the horizon.” Comets and meteors were called stars that give off sparks as they fly, and both foretold of impending doom. Whatever evil was to come had to be warded off by religious incantations.

Stars also provided navigational aid when sailing long distances between island groups. Traditional chants found both in New Zealand and Hawai‘i tell of star reckonings that were used to sail from one island group to another. Two thousand miles separate Hawai‘i from Tahiti, but in the olden days, it is said that several round-trip journeys were made between them. Setting out for Tahiti, the Hawaiian navigators would site the North Star astern until they passed Piko-o-Wākea (the equator), and then they would pick up their bearings by the use of the star *Newe*, most likely the Southern Cross. On their return voyage from Tahiti, however, the prevailing southeast and then the northeast trade winds provided a challenge. To confirm their navigational bearings at sea, the Polynesians invented what they called a magical calabash, which essentially served as a sextant and compass. The top of a common calabash (gourd) was cut open and four holes bored at set distances from the top and from one another. Observations were then

made through the holes, which had been “set” for Hawai‘i. By the use of this simple instrument, the Polynesians were able to keep themselves on course. Knowledge of wind and sea currents and the course of migrating birds also assisted the Polynesian navigators in their long-distance travels throughout the Pacific.

The rising and setting of stars also indicated the changing of seasons. In most Polynesian islands, for example, the rising of the Pleiades (about 20 November) marked the beginning of a new year and a time for rejoicing, for these stars introduced the Polynesian season of plenty.

**See also** Calendar; Canoes; Migrations; Moon, Origin of; Pleiades (Matariki; Sun God; Tāne

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## **STORYTELLING AND CHANTS**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Having no written language, the ancient Polynesians passed down their mythological stories, songs, prayers, histories, genealogies, astronomies, geographies, similes, and other literature, from one generation to another through chants. Chanting was a vital part of daily life in Polynesia, and almost everyone from the high chiefs and priests to the lowest commoner had occasions to make use of it. Prayers and charms were chanted to ward off evil, and they symbolized the deep and sacred relationship between mortals and their deities. Knowledge in any form was considered sacred (even dance chants), and for this reason, chanting was a serious experience.

Most of the chants heard today throughout Polynesia are generally considered modern in origin and have been greatly influenced by Western musical notation. Writers in the late nineteenth century lamented the fact that chanting differed drastically than what it had been earlier in the century. And chants recorded on tapes or cylinders in the early twentieth century differ from what we hear today. Describing the exact character of ancient chanting is, therefore, difficult, since many of the exact meanings of the ancient words, phrases, and expressions to describe such chants have become incomprehensible to modern readers. Despite all that, some generalizations of this near lost art can be presented, and the following paragraphs are an attempt to describe Polynesian chanting in simple, easy-to-understand terminology.

First of all, Polynesian chanters used a central pitch (a principal tone, or monotone) with only slight variations from time to time either up or down the musical scale, often using quarter steps, within a very limited range. On the other hand, Western music uses half or full steps within a wide range of several octaves. Since Polynesian quarter steps are impossible to note on a modern scale, many ancient chants could not be notated and, therefore, have been lost, although their texts have survived. The closest resemblance to Polynesian chanting today that most American contemporaries can relate to is Native American chanting, although Polynesian chants are slightly more intricate and varied in their presentation.

Another character of Polynesian chanting is the great variations in voice quality—using loudness and softness, trills and tremors, vowel clipping, pulsating tones, and stresses and unstressed syllables. Based upon his long study of Polynesian chants, Hawaiian scholar Nathaniel B. Emerson (1839–1916) describes Polynesian chanting in the following way: “The voice goes wavering and lilting along like a canoe on a rippling ocean. Then, [all] of a sudden, it swells upward, as if lifted by some wave of emotions; and there for a time it travels with the same fluctuating movement, soon descending to its old monotone, until again moved to rise on the breast of some fresh impulse” (Emerson 1909, 170–171).

Polynesians were word-oriented people, and the composers of the ancient chants deliberately employed various literary devices to make the meanings of their words obscure by introducing various levels of meanings and symbolic associations into their texts. For example, direct references to Polynesian royal families or mentioning their names was *tapu*, therefore, symbols or allusions were used instead. A “cluster of roses” or the name of a heavenly constellation might be used in the song to refer to the royal family. In Tonga, this popular device is called *heliaki*—to refer to natural objects and places by the use of allusions or symbols rather specifics. A contemporary Tongan poet, Nau Saimone, makes use of this device when he says, “I bow to the dove in the tower, And the lion in *Mala’e Kula*” (Shumway 1977, 33). The “dove in the tower” refers to Queen Salote (1900–1965) and the “lion in *Mala’e Kula*” to the grave of her great-grandfather King George Tupou I (with a lion statue guarding it) in Nuku’alofa, Tonga’s capital. Other literary devices, such as alliteration, metathesis, repetition, parallelisms, rhetorical questions, allegories, the use of stock phrases, word and name splitting, and the lengthening of final vowels, all add to the complexity of Polynesian chants.

Ancient chanters usually received lengthy training in special schools (see the “Schools of Education” entry in this chapter) or through long apprenticeship instruction. Only members of the chiefly class became chanters, although we



sometimes hear of a gifted commoner who picked up the art through careful imitation. There were special “talking chiefs” in Sāmoa whose specialty was keeping instructions on proper protocol, traditions, genealogies, and composition. Hawai’i had a group of genealogical specialists who preserved chiefly pedigrees and recited them at certain public gatherings. The *ariori* (traveling entertainers) in Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands preserved the dramas, mythologies, songs, and other lengthy narratives in entertainment form. Every craft’s occupation had its own variety of chants and incantations that governed its tools and work, and certain prayers had to be recited at the beginning of the day—to “wake up” the tools, for example—and then at night to put them to bed. Fables, proverbs, and other stories handed down from mother to child were recited in chant form, much like nursery rhymes and songs are recited or sung to children today.

Most of the Polynesian mythological stories that have come down to us in published texts were set down in writing over a century ago. Unfortunately, the chant forms that relayed these fascinating stories to one another in ancient times have been lost, and today we are left with only the bare skeletal remains of what was once a vibrant and living art form—the chant.

**See also** Arioi Society; Chiefly Class; Dance; Genealogies; Priests; Schools of Education

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## **STRETCHING GODS**

Cultural Group: Eastern Polynesia

Throughout many of the islands of Eastern Polynesia, there exist tales of gods and heroes who have the marvelous ability to stretch themselves to enormous lengths or heights. They appear as giants who can step from one island to another, cause great gashes in the rocks, and effect other drastic changes in the contours of the islands. Some writers often refer to them as “telescoping gods.” The most famous are Hono’ura from the Tuamotu islands, Ono from the Marquesas, Ono Kura from Mangaia (Cook Islands), and Kana from Hawai’i. Some scholars think that these tales are somehow related and may have originated from a sin-

gle source hundreds of years ago. Two such stories are summarized below—one from the Tuamotu islands and one from Hawai'i.

The lengthy Tuamotuan story of the hero Hono'ura actually begins with the exploits of his grandparents (Chief Teena of Tahiti and Princess Ru-marei-hau from Bora Bora) and then of his parents (Aua-toa and his princess wife Te-more-ari'i-vahine) well before he was born. This technique of providing lengthy introductory materials is used in many Polynesian legends, for they set the place and geography for the subsequent story. The narration begins with Ru-marei-hau, a beautiful young princess on Bora Bora, who heard rumors of an extremely handsome young man and set out to find him. She wound up at Tautira on the southeast coast of Tahiti, where she met and eventually married Teena, a local chief who lived inland. Soon, they had a son, Aua-toa, who grew up and set out to see the world. He first made his way around the southern coast of the island to Puna'auia, where he fell in love with the beautiful Princess Te-more-ari'i-vahine. A marriage was arranged between their two families, and the princess returned to Ta'aroa to live with her husband and family.

Not long after, Te-more became pregnant and prematurely gave birth to a son they named Hono'ura. Unfortunately, the child appeared only as a clot of blood, so the father set out to bury it in the woods. Suddenly, a woodland spirit appeared and told Aua-toa to place the clot in a mountain cave. Shortly thereafter, Hono'ura sprang out of the clot and grew into a strong, muscular giant with the ability to lengthen and shorten himself at will, but all the while, he remained alone in his cave.

One day, a stranger, Tautu, came to the cave to offer sacrifices to the sun god Ra'a and found Hono'ura crouching down and ashamed because he was naked. Returning home, Tautu sent word to Hono'ura's parents that their son was still alive, whereupon, they sent their three sons to the cave with appropriate clothing and food for Hono'ura and to ask him to come home with them. Hono'ura said that he needed to remain in the cave for a short time longer, but that his brothers should return to the village and tell everyone that he would show himself the next morning. Sure enough, the next morning Hono'ura donned his new loincloth, strolled out into the open, and began to stretch. Meanwhile, thousands of villagers, waiting in the valley floor, looked up and saw Hono'ura stretching far up into the heavens, even above the clouds that surround the mountaintops.

Soon afterward, the district chief prepared a great feast and invited Hono'ura to come down from the mountain and join them. Before he was able to do so, however, a war party from the Tuamotu islands invaded the district and killed many of its people—even the chief's young son. When Hono'ura reached the village and heard of the tragic news, he was furious and swore

revenge. Before setting out for the Tuamotu islands, however, he made a trip to his mother's family in Puna'auia and then returned to his cave to mourn for the chief's son. After the required period of mourning, Hono'ura carved a magical spear (named Rua-i-pao'o) out of a single ironwood tree and prepared for battle. He and his men traveled to Rā'iatea and then finally to Hiva, where they met the enemy in a bloody battle. King Tū-tapu was slain and his widow, Queen Tepuna, was captured, destined to become the wife of Chief Ta'iha on Tahiti.

On their way back to Tahiti, however, the party was blown off course and landed on the island of Faka'au (Fa'au). Its members camped in a mountain cave there for a time, during which they had several intriguing experiences. Hono'ura and his friends entered an island dance contest. Hono'ura, of course, was the most limber and the most handsome and, therefore, gained the greatest applause. Unfortunately, he and his brother Tumu had a falling out over Hono'ura's killing Tumu's beloved princess, but finally made up and continued to be friends. Meanwhile, Hono'ura married the beautiful Ra'i-e-ho-ata-nua, and they had a son they named 'Aitu-ta'ata-matata'i-te-'aro-'aua.

From Faka'au, the war party eventually continued its way to avenge their chief's death. They finally reached Ta-kume, found their chief's corpse decaying upon the enemy's *marae* (temple), and encountered a deadly ocean monster (Te-a'u-roa), whom Hono'ura destroyed with his magical weapons. Soon, they met their enemy's extensive forces, and defeated them by ambushing them. With their revenge complete, Hono'ura and his warriors returned to Tahiti. Of course, his fame spread throughout the islands, and he was offered the sovereignty of the entire island, but he refused. He lived the rest of his life in retirement. Today Tuamotuan islanders still point to various outbreaks in the rocks and mountains and tell stories of how they were created by Hono'ura in his famous battles against their ancestors.

Numerous Hawaiian epic stories tell of their stretching god, Kana, who, similar to Hono'ura, created gashes in the mountains and formed stone ledges and immense footprints in the islands. Some maintain that he could step from one island to another or wade through the sea from one island to another. The Kana legends relate the stories of the dramatic rescue of his mother Hina, who was captured and carried off by a chief from Moloka'i. Kana joined his father's war party to rescue her, but his sheer weight sunk every canoe he boarded. Finally, an ancient canoe was unearthed from the island's uplands just to bear Kana across to Moloka'i. (The legend doesn't say why he just didn't walk across!) In the ensuing battle, Kana stretched himself high into the sky, turned himself into a huge spiderweb, and crushed the enemy. Once the battle ended, Kana returned to Hawai'i with his mother, Hina. Another legend tells how Kana rescued the stars, sun, and moon that were abducted to Kahiki (Tahiti?) by its chief Ka-

hoa-lei. Kana stretched far up into the sky from Hawai'i and then dropped down on the island of Tahiti. There he was befriended by relatives who restored the objects stolen from Hawai'i, including the stars, sun, and moon. Various geographical sites in Hawai'i are attributed to Kana—a footprint on the island of Kaua'i, the hill Haupū and the Rocks of Kana on Moloka'i, the island Molokini, and a notch in the crater of Hale-a-ka-lā on the island of Māui, where he leaned across its majestic mountain.

*See also* Hina; Hiro; Māui

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## SUN GOD

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Although all Polynesians recognize the sun as one of their gods, none of them gives him the reverence that other ancient peoples have done—the Egyptians, Sumerians, and Indians, for example, all of whom regarded the sun as one of their principal gods. In fact, very little information regarding the sun god (called Rā or Lā) can be found in the traditional myths from Tahiti, Sāmoa, or Tonga (although some do exist). The absence of reference to the sun god in Hawai'i leads some scholars to believe that perhaps the ancient legends were suppressed in modern times because of their being either erotic or extremely sacred in character.

The Māoris of New Zealand, however, have several extant legends regarding the sun. They call him Rā, son of Rangi, the great Sky Father, and his wife, Wero-wero. Rā's half-sister is the moon goddess Marama. One Māori chant tells us:

'Twas Rangi who, with Atū-tahi,  
Brought forth the moon.  
And Rangi Wero-wero took,  
And, yet unseen, the sun produced.  
He, silent, skimmed the space above,  
And then burst forth the glowing eye of heaven  
To give thee light, O man! (White 1887, 1:7)

Another chant tells us that Rā's two wives live in the depths of the ocean, Hine-takurua (winter) far to the north and Raumati (summer) far to the south, and Rā spends his time throughout the year visiting one wife and then the other. It is

said that originally Rā's daily path across the sky was much faster than it is today. As a result, the great goddess Hina had little time to dry her tapa cloths in the open air and sunshine. She complained to her son Māui, the illustrious demigod, who took pity upon her and subsequently devised a plan to slow down the sun. He made a long rope from his sister's hair, and with a magical club he received from his grandmother, he set out toward the east, the place of the rising sun. When the skittery Rā appeared on the horizon the following morning, Māui lassoed him with his rope and then beat him with his magical club until the sun agreed to slow down his travels through the heavens and make the days much longer. Since then, Rā slowly limps across the heavens, and humans have much more time to do their daily chores.

*See also* Hina; Māui; Moon, Origin of

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## TAHAKI

Cultural Group: Central Polynesia.

Tahaki (variant spellings include Kaha'i, Kahaki, Tafa'i, Tavai, and Tāwhaki) is considered the second most popular hero/demigod in all of Polynesia, second only to the famous Māui. Although stories of Tahaki can be found in most of the island groups, the most detailed are those that come from Central Polynesia (Tahiti, the Tuamotus, Rarotonga, Sāmoa, and New Zealand). Polynesians regard Tahaki as the chief of all chiefs, the exemplary aristocrat, and the textbook role model who provides an ideal by which all other chiefs are compared. Although details of his famous exploits are echoed in many other Polynesian myths, it is his outstanding character that endears him to the eager listener and thus makes his legends timeless.

In the Tuamotus, Tahaki's father, Hema, and mother, Huauri, had a tumultuous courtship before their marriage. When their first son Karihi-nui was born, his grandmother, Kuhi (a witch), prophesied that he would be no good. But when Tahaki was born, he was given a special blessing with magical powers. (Some legends claim that the two boys were actually first cousins.) Not too long afterward, Hema decided to go crabbing on a stretch of beach that was *kapu* (taboo). The beach was the domain of a group of goblins from a land called Matuauru. After lying in wait for several nights, the goblins captured Hema and carried him

off to Matuauru, where King Puna disgustingly turned him into a privy seat in his outhouse. Then, Puna tore out Hema's eyes and gave them to his daughters (the star maidens) to use for light during their nightly occupations. At home, Hema's disappearance had left his sons alone and fatherless.

One day, the two boys were playing on the beach when some of their friends began teasing and insulting them about their father. They blurted out that he was filthy and living in a dung heap. Devastated, the two boys questioned their mother, who told them the true story of their father's fate. The boys swore revenge and began to make preparations to set out and rescue their father. As they left, their mother rushed after them to offer advice on how to protect themselves at sea.

En route, the two brothers decided to stop to visit Kuhi, their blind grandmother who was a witch and who did not permit strangers into her territory. Tahaki warned his brother to be careful of her devious tricks. Approaching her hut, the two boys saw her fishing in her favorite pool with a hook decorated with brilliantly colored red feathers. Karihi-nui could not resist the colorful lure and moved closer to investigate. This time, Kuhi cast her line and snagged Karihi-nui in the armpit. Not recognizing her grandson, she reeled him in and tied him up. Tahaki considered what he should do. Immediately, he climbed a nearby coconut tree, but the tree grew taller and taller as he worked his way to the top. Finally reaching the nuts on top, he called to his grandmother and, at the same time, he threw a coconut that hit her in the eye. Remarkably, the old lady regained her sight in that eye. Tahaki threw again and this time hit her other eye. Both eyes had regained their sight. Once the grandmother recognized her two grandchildren, she untied Karihi-nui and welcomed them with open arms.

She offered them the only sleeping quarters she had—under the beds of the three star-maidens, whom she said were the daughters of King Puna. When the first evening star went to sleep, Karihi-nui attacked her, but she got away. The same happened with the midnight star. Kuhi became disheartened with her grandson and sent him home. Tahaki, however, needed no instructions. When the morning star arrived for her rest, Tahaki grabbed her and the two struggled until they reached the ceiling of heaven. Upon the advice of his grandmother, however, Tahaki released her, but not long after, the star maiden returned to Tahaki, and they lived together for some time.

Again Tahaki set out to find his father. First, however, he had to find directions. For this purpose, he had to visit the other star maidens, one of whom knew where his father was located. Once there, he overheard the midnight star exclaim that she had just returned from the land of Puna, where she saw Hema being used as an outhouse. Immediately, Tahaki rushed to Puna, where he rescued his father, cleaned him up, and returned him to the safety of the two other star maidens. Returning to Puna, Tahaki wove a large fishing net, threw it over

the hut where the goblins were sleeping, and set it on fire. The goblins awoke but could not make their way through the magical net. Tahaki then clubbed them to death, rejoined his father, and then the two returned home.

A fragment of another chant tells us that some time afterward, Tahaki went to visit his father far inland. While there, Tahaki was struck with a spear and died. His spirit, however, rose to the sacred heavens of the god Tāne, who encircled Tahaki with a red-feathered girdle (signifying divinity and royalty) and ordained him as god and regent of Havaiki-nui, that mysterious Polynesian underworld, or homeland, in the sky.

Other island stories of Tahaki tell of his many adventures and romances, and they, too, supply further details concerning his personality and character. Most of the stories refer to him as the most handsome hero who ever lived. Striking are his red complexion (skin) and his curly auburn hair, red being the color beloved by gods and chiefs alike. His eyes twinkle like the stars in the heavens, and his size and long fingernails indicate that he is of chiefly rank, for no decent Polynesian chief would do any menial work that could be done by servants or slaves. Although being human, Tahaki faces his faults with dignity and reserve. His humility is shown in stories in which he willingly takes the part of an outcast of society—an old, dirty man or a slave, for example—in order to right a wrong. He often exhibits his humility by giving up a prize to an underling rather than taking it himself.

Although having some magical powers as an earthling, Tahaki becomes a god only upon his death. The Māoris proclaim him the god of thunder and lightning, and other islanders revere him as a god of health, for in one story, he restores himself back to life time and time again.

**See also** Māui; Rata or Laka

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## **TĀNE**

Cultural Group: Tahiti and New Zealand

Tāne (Kāne in Hawai'i) represents one of the greatest deities in all of Polynesia, and he is worshiped in almost every island. In Tahiti, for example, he is the son



of the goddess Ātea (vast space), daughter of the creator god Ta'aroa, and her consort Papa-tu'oi. One of the sacred chants tells us that originally Tāne was born without shape or form:

'Aere e, 'aere 'ere e!	O, shapeless, O shapeless
'Aore mata 'aore upo'o, 'aore ihu,	No face, no head, no nose, no
'aore e tari'a,	ears,
'Aore vaha, 'aore 'a'ī, 'aore tua, 'aore	No mouth, no neck, no back, no
'ōuma,	chest,
'Aore 'ao'ao, 'aore 'ōpū, 'aore	No ribs, no abdomen, no
pito,	umbilicus,
'Aore huhā, 'aore tohe, 'aore e turi,	No thighs, no buttocks, no knees,
'Aore 'āvae, 'aore tupua'e 'āvae!	No legs, no sole of the foot!
Eaha te tupu o teie tamaiti?	O, what growth is this little child?
'Aere e, 'aere 'ere e!	O, shapeless, O shapeless nothing!
I fānau rā ia vai ia tama?	Who could have borne such a child?
I fānau iā 'Ātea e iā Papa-tu'oi,	He is born of Ātea and Papa-tu'oi,
O te fānau'a 'una'una a Ta'aroa.	The handsome offspring of Ta'aroa.

(Henry 1828, 364, accents by author)

Ta'aroa saw the shapeless form of his grandson and sent out messengers to find workers who could fashion it into a child. Finally, two artisans agreed to the task, and they picked up their tools and set forth. Upon reaching the spot, however, they could not stand the presence of the powerful goddess Ātea, and they returned home. Other workers volunteered, but they all failed to reach the young child. Finally, the messengers returned to Ta'aroa and relayed the unfortunate news, whereupon Ta'aroa sent his own spirit to shape the young child. He took bark from all the important trees to create the child's skin—bark for a red skin, bark for a smooth skin, bark for a porous skin, rays from the sun for a warm skin, and from the moon for a light skin. He then fashioned every other part of Tāne's body from his head to his toes. When Ta'aroa finished, the child became a living god. Ta'aroa then placed him in the tenth sky, where the Milky Way flows and where Tāne was given two friends to be his companions—a handsome shark and a little pet bird (a white sea swallow) called Tae-fei-aitu that nestled lovingly against his neck. Mariners at sea knew they were being protected by the great god Tāne when they saw these small birds light upon their ship. Then Ta'aroa formed a wife for Tāne; her name was Aruru (collector), because it was her duty

to collect all of Tāne's tools for him. Tāne stood proud and tall for he was now one of the major gods of heaven.

Another Tahitian legend tells of a major war between Tāne and the god Te Tumu, one of the gods who holds up the pillars of heaven. The exact reason for their falling out is not given, but tragically the earth became the scene of their battle. Te Tumu sent heavy rains to fall upon the earth; Tāne countered by sending down clear weather and sunshine to dry up the rain. Te Tumu then caused famine and death everywhere among humans, but the enraged Tāne sent down a plentiful supply of fish and other nourishing food. Te Tumu caused drowsiness and sleep to fall upon everyone, but Tāne retorted by sending wakefulness by day and sleep by night. The vigorous battle continued between the two, and Tāne decided to end the conflict by destroying the earth. Humans, however, heard of the news and assembled at Puna'auia (on the west coast of Tahiti) to offer up their prayers. Tāne and his messenger Ro'o descended from heaven, but rather than destroying the earth, Tāne brought a peace offering, a *pua* tree (*Besleria lorifolia*), which he planted in Puna'auia. He proclaimed "when strife arises in the morning, let there be peace in the evening; and if there is contention in the evening, let there be reconciliation in the morning." Earth and heaven were once again reconciled.

In New Zealand, Tāne is the son of Rangi (Sky Father) and Papa (Earth Mother), the god of good and light and the god of forests, birds, and insects. In the beginning, Tāne and his brothers were instrumental in separating their loving parents so that light could brighten their day. His brother Tāwhiri-mātea (god of storms) opposed the separation, and as a result, the two gods waged a fierce war in which Tāwhiri-mātea's howling storms ravaged the beautiful forests of Tāne. During the creation, Tāne was responsible for scattering the twinkling stars throughout the heavens, for spreading the vast oceans throughout the world, and for creating the first humans, the man Tiki and the woman Hine-hau-one. There also exists in the highest heavens, a pool called the Wai-ora-a-Tāne (Sacred waters of Tāne), where the Māoris believe the waning moon goes each month to renew itself by bathing in its holy waters.

**See also** Kāne; Rangi and Papa; Tangaloa; Wākea

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## TANGALOA

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Tangaloa (or spelled Kanaloa, Ta'aroa, Takaroa, Tagaloa) is considered one of the greatest deities in all of Polynesia, although his actual position of authority varies from one island group to another. In Sāmoa, some stories claim that Tangaloa was the original creator of all the heavens and earth. As he looked down from the heavens, he saw only rolling, crashing waves that covered the entire earth. He could not find a place on which to rest, so he decided to create land. One *tala* (story) says he threw heavenly rocks down into the watery deep and thus created the first islands of Sāmoa, but others say he caused the islands to simply rise up out of the ocean. They all agree on one point, however, that the sacred island of Manu'a (eastern Sāmoa) was created first, then the other Samoan islands—Savai'i, 'Upolu, Tutuila, and so forth—and lastly the island groups of Tonga and Fiji, which lie far to the west. Tangaloa's faithful daughter Turi was his helper. Again and again, she was sent down to earth in the form of a bird until she finally found suitable land upon which to rest. She returned to heaven and reported back to her father.

Tangaloa then sent her down once again with a creeping vine that brought forth humans who, at first, resembled worms—no legs, arms, heads, or faces. But Tangaloa descended from heaven and fashioned them into human beings so that they might be suitable to entertain Tangaloa when he returned to earth once more.

As is customary in Polynesia, Tangaloa in Sāmoa assumes many suffixes, for example: Tangaloa-lagi-tuvalu (Tangaloa of the eighth heaven), Tangaloa-fa'a-tupu-nuu (Tangaloa the creator of lands), and so on. His primary residence is the moon, and the Samoans refer to its shadows as the "man in the moon." The month of May was sacred to Tangaloa, and many taboos prevented the ancient Samoans from carrying on their normal duties during that month. Tangaloa had many children, and his earthly descendants became the ruling chiefs of Manu'a, and their titles were recognized as the most sacred in all of Sāmoa. (Since Manu'a became one of the islands ceded to the United States in 1905 and is not currently part of the independent state of Sāmoa, the title of Tui Manu'a is currently vacant.)

In New Zealand, Tangaroa is the lord of the oceans, the son of Rangi (Sky Father) and Papa (Earth Mother), and in the creation, Tangaroa and his three brothers were responsible for tearing apart their parents who had been forever in a deep embrace. The separation, fortunately, brought about the existence of day, night, and space in which gods and humans could dwell comfortably. Tangaroa's one brother Tāwhiri-mātea, however, opposed the separation of their

parents and declared war against Tangaroa and his brothers. Fearing for his life, Tangaroa fled to the ocean for safety where he became the god of the seas and all of its creatures.

In Tahiti, Ta'aroa's position as the primordial force of creation is without question. Tahitian epics proclaim that from the beginning there was only Ta'aroa, the great creator god without father or mother, who created himself alone in his shell of utter darkness for eons of time. He broke out of his shell (similar to an egg), and from one-half of the shell he made the heavens and from the other half the earth. He breathed into "foundation" and it became *tumu-nui* (husband), into "stratum rock" and it became Papa (wife). The two cohabited and brought forth other earthly forms. Then Ta'aroa created the various trees, vegetation, animals, and humans with their unique and varied social and political structures.

By the time the first European explorers arrived in Tahiti (1767 and after), Ta'aroa's status in the hierarchy of gods had surprisingly become subordinate to that of his son, the war god 'Oro, and his worship. The famous *marae* (temple) at Tapu-tapu-ātea on Rā'iatea, for example, had originally been dedicated to the god Ta'aroa, but sometime in the distant past, it had transferred allegiance to the new god 'Oro, and the worship of Ta'aroa slipped into the background.

The ancient Tahitians fashioned their gods out of the ironwood tree (*Casuarina*, or more popularly called the Australian pine). The simple carvings resembled a club with one end larger than the other, and they were then covered with tightly woven sennit (twine made from coconut fibers) or tapa cloth and decorated with brightly colored feathers. The only known Ta'aroa idol extant today is the one owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

**See also** Kāne; God Images

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**TAPU**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

The English word “taboo” is derived from the Polynesian word “*tapu*” (“*kapu*” in Hawai’i), a common word that is understood throughout all of Polynesia. Similar to the English, it means forbidden, sacred, or banned from general use. To the Polynesians, however, it carried much more significance and force than its English equivalent. To the ancients, it meant death to anyone who might break a particular *tapu*, whether it had been established by a secular tribal chief or by a sacred high priest.

Taboos regulated every aspect of Polynesian society. There were taboos regulating the relationships between men and women, between commoners and their secular superiors, and between the secular and the religious. There were taboos that regulated every occupation—fishing, hunting, tapa-cloth making, and the like—and there were taboos regarding the eating of foods, sexual relations, and the observances of various religious ceremonies.

The following examples will present an idea of the pervasive character of ancient Polynesian taboos. Chiefs could establish taboos on certain foods at given times in the year. The purpose of the *tapu* was to either control the economy and production of agriculture for the good of the whole, or it might have been established to provide for their own personal use. In the latter case, the particular taboo did not pertain to their own plantations. Lengthy taboos were placed upon the whole community when a high chief or priest died. During the time of mourning, all activity was highly restricted and regulated.

All sacred grounds, outdoor temples, and religious paraphernalia were also taboo and could be touched only by sacred individuals—in most cases by only priests. Members of the nobility were often so taboo that when they visited the house of a commoner, the house had to be burned. Shadows cast by the very high nobility could cause the ground to be hallowed and forbidden to be used by the lower classes. A nobleman’s shadow accidentally cast upon a commoner might bring the commoner’s death. In some islands, members of the high nobility had to be carried upon a dais or the shoulders of a servant to prevent the ground he touched from becoming his personal possession and taboo to anyone else. In Tahiti, it was taboo even for a commoner to utter the name of a member of the high nobility.

Taboos upon women were even more extensive. They could not eat with the men or eat food prepared by men. (Men usually did the cooking in ancient Polynesia.) Women and children could not eat certain foods commonly eaten by male members of the family. Women could not touch the fishing implements of her

husband, nor could she touch his fishing canoe for fear of contaminating its sacred character. She could not enter the outdoor temples or touch anything designated religious. (Exceptions, however, were made to high-ranking women among the nobility.) Women could not enter homes where a chief had visited. And the list could go on and on.

There were numerous taboos regulating the various occupations. Certain days were taboo for catching particular fish, and there were specific seasons in which certain fish could not be caught at all. When this latter type of taboo was finally lifted, the first day of fishing was dedicated to the gods. Only one canoe would be allowed to go out to fish; the catch from it was given to the priests. The second day was set aside for the chiefs, and it was only on the third day that the commoners were allowed to fish for themselves. Certain areas of the lagoons or reefs ("fishing holes," for example) could be set aside as taboo, and only a certain individual had the right to fish there. A *tapu* site could generally be recognized by the several poles on the reef or shore on which were attached bunches of bamboo leaves or tapa cloth. Today, Polynesians use modern signs that read in bold letters "TAPU," or in Hawai'i "KAPU," and these words are much more effective than the English "No Trespassing" signs.

**See also** Chiefly Class; Mana; Priests; Temples

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## **TATTOO**

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

One of the most unique art forms of ancient Polynesia was body tattooing, an art form that today has been popularized and widely disseminated throughout the world. The Polynesians, however, did not originate the art of decorating their bodies with permanent markings, but because of the European and American exploration of the Pacific in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the art form caught on with the visiting sailors, who obtained tattoos in Polynesia, and then popularized them back home. The English word "tattoo," in fact, comes from the Tahitian word "*tatau*" (tapping).

The early Polynesians brought the art form and its original designs with them from their origins in the southwest Pacific, either from Melanesia and/or



*Illustration 3.39: Painting by Gottfried Lindauer depicting an ancient Māori tattooist (tohunga-ta-moko) at work. The tattooist strikes the patient with a small chisel made of obsidian or bone whose teeth were dipped into pigment to create the designs. (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, gift of Mr. H. E. Partridge, 1915)*

Austronesia (Southeast Asia). Wherever the Polynesians subsequently settled throughout the Pacific, they carried the art form with them, and it was considered an important cultural rite of passage among the islanders. The missionaries who converted the Polynesians to the Christian faith, however, discouraged tattooing, and the practice almost died out in the Pacific. In the late twentieth century, however, there began a renaissance of Polynesian cultures, and the art of tattooing was revived and became popular once again.

The electric drills we see used in tattoo parlors today, of course, were not used anciently. The Polynesian artist, who held a high place in society, applied his complex designs with a sharp serrated comb (usually made of bone) attached





*Illustration 3.40: An engraving by George H. Langsdorf showing a full-body tattoo of a Marquesan Islander. Marquesan tattoos were the most elaborate in all of Polynesia. Women there were also tattooed, but less elaborately than men. (Bettmann/CORBIS)*

to a short-handled rod that was hit with a wooden or bamboo mallet. Pigments for the color were made from the soot or ashes from various plants or from earth minerals and mixed with oil. The chisel-comb was dipped into the pigment and then placed on the recipient's skin. The tattoo artist then gave the chisel a swift and forceful tap with a mallet so that it pierced the upper skin and deposited the colored pigment (Illustration 3.39). This painful procedure was usually accompanied with various religious rituals, chanting, and feasting. Both men and women were tattooed, although women were tattooed to a far lesser degree than the men. Of all the Polynesians, the Marquesans tattooed their bodies far more extensively than the others. Some early explorers wrote that the Marquesan chiefs were almost black from the many tattoos they had obtained throughout their lifetime (see Illustration 3.40).

There are several myths regarding the origin of the tattoo. In Sāmoa, a story is told of two Siamese goddesses, Ta'emā and Tila-faigā, who were born on the is-

land of Ta'ū in the Manu'a group. When they were grown, they set out to explore the world. They decided to swim to the neighboring island of Tutuila, and while doing so, they were hit by a floating log that severed them in two. Once on Tutuila, they performed many marvelous feats to impress the Samoans with their powers. They formed the first war clubs from huge boulders and thus introduced warfare among the islanders. From here, they made their way to the Fijian islands far to the west. They were introduced to the art of tattooing of women by



*Illustration 3.41: A contemporary Samoan tattoo done in the traditional fashion of decorating the body only from the waist to the knees. Once discouraged, traditional Polynesian tattooing has again become fashionable. (Bob Krist/CORBIS)*

two artists named Filelei and Tufou, who gave the sisters their tattoo instruments. The sisters were determined to bring the art of tattooing women back to Sāmoa with them. On their return home, the sisters swam and sang their song of the tattoo: “Women alone are tattooed, but not the men.” By the time they reached Sāmoa, the cold ocean and the stress of the journey caused them to forget the exact words, and they had reversed the order and sang, “Only men are tattooed, but not the women.” That is why only men in Sāmoa are tattooed. (See contemporary Samoan tattoo in Illustration 3.41)

In New Zealand, the Māori tell how humans first learned the art of tattooing. (See Illustration 3.42.) Far in the distant past lived a chief named Mataora whose wife Niwareke was descended from Rangi and Papa, the ancient gods of New Zealand. Once in a heated argument, Mataora hit Niwareke, whereupon Niwareke left him and went to live with her family in the underworld. Now penitent and desperate, Mataora soon rushed after her. Having passed through the doors to the underworld and having traveled a way down a path, he spied a campsite where a man, Ue-tonga, was tattooing the face of another man. When



*Illustration 3.42: Māori facial tattoos (ta moko) were intricate with spiral and rectilinear designs. Ancient legends say that Chief Mataora visited the underworld where he was the first mortal to be tattooed in the traditional style, similar to this photo. (Bettmann/CORBIS)*

Ue-tonga looked into the face of Mataora and saw designs drawn upon his face merely with charcoal, he quickly wiped the *ta moko* (tattoo) off and said, "Those above do not tattoo properly." Ue-tonga then threw him to the ground and began carving the designs into his face with his sharp instruments. Mataora, of course, cried out in pain, but he endured the process. His mournful cries were eventually heard by his wife Niwareke, who was living nearby and who was weaving mats. She rushed to the scene to see her father, Ue-tonga, carving the designs upon her husband's face. She had pity upon her husband, and after the ritual was over, she took him home to take care of his wounds until they had healed. The reconciled couple then made their way back to the door of the underworld, but at the gate, they forgot to make the customary gift token to the gatekeeper, and so the gate was forever closed behind them. As a result, humans were no longer allowed to return from the underworld, and permanent death was thus introduced into the world. Back at home, Mataora continued to live with his wife, and he passed the art of the "correct" form of tattooing to others.

**See also** Arioi Society; Priests; *Tapu*

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## TEMPLES

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Not all Polynesian societies built elaborate structures in order to worship their gods. The earliest Polynesians who settled Sāmoa and Tonga, for example, built simple *fale aitu* (god houses) constructed of wooden beams and thatched roofing. They were built directly on the ground or on a small raised platform (some say star-shaped), but time and climate have taken their toll. As a result,



*Illustration 3.43: A 1797 drawing of the large Tahitian marae (outdoor temple) Mahaiatea by English missionary James Wilson. Constructed in the 1760s by “Queen” Purea, the marae is currently in ruins and neglected. (From A Missionary Voyage to the Southern Pacific Ocean, 1796–1798, by James Wilson.)*

very few archaeological remains of these structures have survived in these two island groups.

In contrast, the eastern Polynesian island groups constructed huge open-air temples generally called *marae* (*malae*, *ma’ae*) and dedicated them to their gods. These temples were built of *ahu* (stone platforms), on top of which were constructed various sacred buildings (similar to the god houses in Sāmoa and Tonga), upright stone slabs for seats, sacrificial altars and pits, and sometimes dwelling places for the officiating priests. Since the introduction of Christianity in the early nineteenth century, most of these *marae* are now in ruins; fortunately, some of the early explorers and missionaries to the islands left detailed descriptions and drawings of them. The largest of all the stone *marae* are found in the Marquesas Islands. In the nineteenth century, the famous writer Herman Melville visited the Marquesas and described one that was 97.5 feet (30 meters)





*Illustration 3.44: A slightly smaller marae (temple) at Arahurahu, Tahiti, lies in a beautiful valley not far from the Mahaiatea marae and is being restored. (Robert D. Craig)*

long and 15 feet (4.6 meters) high. On top, he found a flat open space around which were various structures, some of which were dwellings for chiefs, warriors, and priests. These large structures seem even more remarkable when one considers that the huge stones used in their construction were cut and closely fit together without the aid of any metal tools. There were often stone statues, some as tall as 6.25 feet (2.5 meters), strategically placed at various points on top of the platform.

The *marae* in French Polynesia (Tahiti and neighboring islands) are almost equally as elaborate as those in the Marquesas. The great *marae* at Mahaiatea on Tahiti, for example, resembles a rectangular step pyramid. Its foundation measures 71 by 263 feet (22 by 81 meters), on top of which are built eleven steps rising to a height of approximately 50 feet (15.5 meters). In 1797, the English missionary James



*Illustration 3.45: The small marae Taputapuātea on Rā'iatea (an island north of Tahiti) was once considered the most sacred temple throughout all of Polynesia. (Douglas Peebles/CORBIS)*



*Illustration 3.46: City of Refuge, the Pu'uhonua-o-Honaunau complex, on the island of Hawai'i, built as early as 1450, served as a place of refuge for defeated Hawaiian warriors or for those who had broken sacred laws. (Anders Ryman/CORBIS)*

Wilson visited the site, described it in detail, and drew a remarkable sketch of the temple that appeared in his history published in 1799. Unfortunately, most of the *marae* are currently in ruins.

The most celebrated of all eastern Polynesian *marae* is Taputapuatea located at 'Opoa on the sacred island of Rā'iatea (north of Tahiti; see Illustration 3.45). It is not nearly as large or elaborate as the other *marae*, but its reputation is known throughout the South Pacific. It is said that anciently the various Polynesian islands (even as far away as New Zealand) would send yearly sacrifices to Taputapuatea. This *marae* consists of a simple *ahu*, approximately 130 by 23 feet (40 by 7 meters), paved with smooth stones, and surrounded by a number of stone slabs, some measuring 13 feet (4 meters) high, which served as backrests for the priests participating in the ceremonies.

In Hawai'i, the open-air temples are called *heiau* rather than *marae*. Although Hawaiian *heiau* do not compare in size to those in the Marquesas, they are still remarkable. Several are especially significant. One called Kaneaki on the island of O'ahu has recently been reconstructed.



The officiating priest would enter the oracle towers (originally covered with tapa cloth) in order to communicate with the gods. Another interesting Hawaiian complex is the City of Refuge, a huge stone enclosure located at Honaunau on the Big Island of Hawai'i. It has been restored and is currently maintained by the U.S. Park Service. It consists of a massive 13-foot-high (4-meter) wall enclosure that houses 3 *heiau*, 2 of which have been recently reconstructed by using extant drawings made by the early missionaries to the islands in 1819 (see Illustration 3.46).

Surprisingly, the New Zealand Māoris did not build large structures for the worship of their gods. Māoris call the open space within their fortified villages a *marae*, which to them simply means the communal gathering place in front of their meeting house rather than a religious building. Māoris lacked the elaborate religious ceremonies found elsewhere in Polynesia, so their religious sites were generally simple shrines or secluded spots marked by unique-looking stones or some other natural object.

**See also** Ceremonies, Religious; God Images; *Moai*, Easter Island; Schools of Education; *Tapu*

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## TĪ PLANT

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

The tī plant (*Cordyline terminalis*) is known throughout the Pacific. It is spelled *tī* in New Zealand, Tahiti, and Sāmoa; *kī* in Hawai'i; and *sī* in Tonga. Polynesians have used this common plant for a variety of purposes for thousands of years—for food, decoration, clothing, medicine, and religious ceremonies. It is one of the most highly regarded of Polynesian plants, and there are more than twenty varieties. The plant is easily propagated from stem cuttings, and new species can be created from cross-pollinated seeds. The plant sends up single shoots, out of which emerge long, glossy leaves, some of which at maturity might reach four to five feet in length (see Illustration 3.47). Tī plants periodically bloom, but their flowers are insignificant when compared to many other tropical flowers.

The Polynesians used all parts of the plant. The roots were used as a food additive, mashed and mixed with other foods to give them sweetness, and the stems could then be made into various utensils or tools. The long, broad leaves



*Illustration 3.47: Tī plant (Cordyline terminalis), used by ancient Polynesians for food, decoration, clothing, medicine, and in religious ceremonies. (Robert D. Craig)*

of the plant were made into skirts, worn at various lengths and by both sexes. The leaves were hand-sewn vertically, with the stem at the top attached to a girdle made of bark (tapa) cloth or tī leaves. The leaves were overlapped so the skirt was full and secure. Most commoners wore this simple, easy-to-make skirt. The Samoans also constructed a loincloth out of the leaves of the red tī plant, in which case it was called the *titi*. Dancers preferred tī-leaf skirts because they made rustling sounds when swished, and the

dancers could obtain a variety of effects from their movements. On certain occasions, the leaves were shredded to create other sounds, and in Tonga, this was the preferred type of an everyday *sī*-leaf skirt.

Leaves of the plant also possessed certain supernatural qualities. Fire walkers in the South Pacific, and especially in Tahiti, used tī-leaf skirts in their fiery demonstrations. The tī plant was sacred to the fire goddess, and the thick leaves provided the walkers with some protection from the heat. Tī leaves were also used to ward off unwanted ghosts and spirits. A tī leaf, for example, could be tied to a certain object to stop any unwelcome visitor, or an individual would carry a tī leaf at night to avoid any uninvited ghosts. The leaf was also regarded as a major religious symbol in the marriage ceremonies uniting a man and woman, and no religious *marae* or *heiau* was built without planting slips of the plant around the structure. Sacred offerings to the gods in the *marae* or *heiau* were normally wrapped in tī leaves. This led to the custom in certain islands today of wrapping a stone (the “offering”) in a tī leaf and leaving it upon the walls or altars of the *heiau* or *marae* as a spiritual oblation by the visitor to the site.

**See also** Breadfruit, Origin of; Ceremonies, Religious; Coconut, Origin of the; Plants (Food); *Tapu*; Temples

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**TINIRAU**

Cultural Group: Central Polynesia

There are many Polynesian stories told of the handsome Tinirau and his beautiful Hina. Collectively, they thread together a romance that might be called the Polynesian soap opera. It goes something like this. Boy pursues girl, but girl rejects boy. Girl has change of heart and pursues boy. Boy rejects girl but eventually falls in love with her, and the two get married. Domestic troubles arise and plague their family throughout the next generation. All of this conflict is accompanied by intrigue, murder, attempted suicide, and supernatural forces. In some islands, Tinirau (with variant names such as Kinilau, Tinilau, Tigilau, Tingirau, Sinilau, etc.) is regarded as one of the gods, but in others, only as a high chief. Similarly, Hina (with variant names such as Hine, Ina, or Sina) is often linked with the moon goddess Hina, and in some stories she is a daughter of a high chief—in Sāmoa called a *taupou*.

Many of the stories in Western Polynesia tell of the young Tigilau from Sāmoa who heard of Sina's remarkable beauty and traveled a great distance to Tonga to locate her. Late at night, he forced his way into her secluded living quarters, and Sina angrily rebuked him. As Tigilau turned to leave, Sina suddenly recognized that he was the handsome Tigilau. She pleaded with him to take her with him, but then indifferent to her pleas, Tigilau returned home alone. Back in Sāmoa, he prepared to marry another young maiden of his own village. Meanwhile, the distraught Sina threw herself into the ocean and swam after her beloved. She had numerous adventures and was aided in her journey by various sea creatures. Arriving in Sāmoa, she was exhausted, crawled upon the shore, and fell asleep. She was found by Tigilau's mother, who discovered who she was and decided to help her gain Tigilau's love—Sina had to gain his attention by singing loudly and juggling oranges. Unfortunately, Tigilau was not impressed, and still in a bad humor, he demanded to know who told her to do such things against his specific commands. Hearing it was his own mother, he called for his mother's execution and banished Sina to a hut in the forest.

Distraught, Sina wasted away almost to nothing. One day, however, Tigilau came upon the hut and found the neglected Sina. Seeing the destitute condition of the poor girl, he had a change of heart and returned home with her. Not long after, Sina's uncle came looking for her with a fleet of Tongan canoes. Seeing her look so pale and undernourished, Sina's uncle grabbed her, returned to Tonga, and placed her back into her secluded house. This time, it was Tigilau who followed in his canoe, accompanied only by Sina's pet dog. Tigilau arrived in Tonga, but Sina's family would not let him see his beloved. This time, it was Tigilau who pined and wasted away. He eventually sent a basket of yams to Sina to request that she chew them into mash and send them back "to feed her dog." Once the yams had been returned, Tigilau ate the mash, and this public sign of humiliation deeply affected Sina's parents, who rejoined the couple and approved of their marriage.

Another Samoan story relates an interesting sequel to the foregoing tale. In it, Tigilau had other wives who were jealous of the beautiful Sina. Having demonic powers, they immediately plotted a scheme to rid themselves of their newest rival. One evening when the villagers brought their required fresh fish catch of the day to Tigilau's hut, the wives ate it all and blamed Sina for it. Again, Sina was exiled to the forest, where she eventually gave birth to a son. Upon his birth, Sina sent to Tigilau for some oil and mats for the young child, but again his wives intervened and prevented the news from reaching his ears. Eventually, Sina's brother Rupe (pigeon) learned of her distress, flew to her with 101 of the finest mats, showered them down upon her, and planned to carry her and her son back to Tonga. Sina's servant, however, immediately rushed to Tigilau, where he told him of his son and of Sina's great dowry. Tigilau hastened to the exiled Sina, but he was too late. Rupe had just gathered Sina and her son up into his wings and was just about ready to fly away. Tigilau succeeded in grabbing his son, but Rupe successfully flew away with Sina. Tigilau and his son immediately followed after them.

Back in Tonga, Sina's parents had been encouraging the courtship of Sina to many prominent chiefs. Upon hearing this, Tigilau was disturbed and sent his son to Sina to beg that she chew a piece of taro for him. At first Sina did not recognize her own son (since some time had lapsed) and refused. She eventually recognized her son, heard of Tigilau's lamentations, and sorrowfully returned to them. All her suitors were sent away, and some legends say that they were so distraught that they beat their heads against the house posts or stones to show their grief (a common way to show grief or distress among the ancient Polynesians).

Māoris legends in New Zealand tell of Tinirau and Hine, and the details differ slightly from the stories told in central Polynesia. After narrating events leading up to the couple's separation, the story tells of the two's reconciliation and of Tinirau's stay with Hine's family, where he miraculously ended a famine by producing all kinds of fresh fish. Afterwards, Tinirau, Hine, and their son returned to Tinirau's homeland. They were accompanied by Kae, a magician (priest) and a good friend of Hine, who had officiated at the naming ceremony of Tinirau and Hine's son. After a while, Kae decided to return home, and Tinirau offered the services of his pet whale, Tutunui. Kae climbed aboard the whale and set out. Arriving near his home island, Kae forced Tutunui against the sharp coral, where he was severely wounded. Kae then called for the assistance of his relatives, and together they finished killing the whale, cut him up, and cooked him for dinner. Delicious smells from the roasting whale made their way to Tinirau, who was patiently waiting for Tutunui's return. Tinirau was enraged and planned revenge. He swiftly sent his sisters to Kae's island to entrap him and to bring him back for his personal revenge. He told them that they could identify Kae by his missing two front teeth. The sisters finally arrived before Kae's tribe and performed such hilarious *haka* (dances) that Kae grinned widely and exposed his missing teeth. Afterwards, the sisters lulled him into a deep sleep and secretly exported him back to Tinirau. The next morning, Kae awoke and realized what had happened, but it was too late. Tinirau killed him (and some stories say that he was cooked and eaten), and Tinirau's revenge was accomplished.

Other less well-known stories continue the saga and tell of the vengeful wars between the families of Tinirau and Kae; and yet others more well known tell of Hina's subsequent exploits and her "sailing" to the moon, where she becomes the moon goddess.

**See also** Hina; Mana; Marriage; Moon, Origin of; Ocean; Sex and Sexuality

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**UENUKU AND THE MIST MAIDEN**

Cultural Group: New Zealand

All Polynesian islands have fascinating stories regarding the origin of the rainbow, but none as tender and as romantic as that of the New Zealand Māori. They say that long before the rainbow was ever created, the Celestial Mist Maiden, Hine-kohu, and her sister Hine-wai, the Rain Maiden, routinely came down from heaven at night to bathe in the refreshing waters on earth. As the first rays of dawn appeared, they would ascend back to heaven enveloped in a mist so as to be invisible to human eyes. After some time had passed, however, Hine-kohu met a mortal named Uenuku, with whom she became romantically involved. Each night, she would visit him and spend the night. Her sister, Hine-wai, would be left outside to guard the hut and to warn Hine-kohu when the first rays of dawn were approaching. Hine-wai would then call her sister, and the two would return to heaven as the ascending mists of the morning. Whenever Uenuku awoke, of course, he always found his beloved Hine-kohu gone.

As time passed, Uenuku longed to tell his people about his beautiful lover, and he pressed Hine-kohu to stay with him and reveal herself to them. Hine-kohu, however, warned Uenuku that he must not tell anyone of their love until their first child had been born, otherwise, she would leave and never return. Uenuku continued to be vexed that he could not tell anyone of his beautiful Mist Maiden. Finally, he conceived of a plan. He would seal up all the holes and cracks in his hut so that the morning sun could not leak into his quarters, and then he would detain Hine-kohu until his people could gather around and see her as she left. The next day, he carried out his plans, and as usual, Hine-kohu and Hine-wai appeared that evening. When the first rays of dawn appeared the next morning, Hine-wai called for her sister, but Uenuku detained his love, saying that Hine-wai was mistaken because obviously there was no light coming through the cracks in the hut. Several times, Hine-wai called for her sister, but there was no response. Finally, Hine-wai was forced to return to heaven, leaving her sister in the hut and in the arms of Uenuku.

Eventually, the rays of the Morning Maiden reached the hut and flung open its doors. As the bright light filled the hut, Hine-kohu knew what had happened. She had been duped. She quickly left the hut, which by that time had been surrounded by a multitude of people, and ascended to the top of the roof. There, clothed only in her long flowing hair, she sang a final farewell to her lover. A mist from heaven descended, wrapped itself around the beautiful maiden, and carried her off into the heavens. Never again did Hine-kohu descend to earth in her earthly form, and never again did Uenuku set his eyes upon his beautiful

Mist Maiden. Wrought with grief, he spent the rest of his years roaming from one place to another in hopes of being able to atone for his foolishness and to find his beautiful bride. Death finally came to the grief-stricken Uenuku in a far-off land. So great was his love and his atonement that the gods in the heavens took pity upon him, gathered him up into their abode in the sky, and transformed him into a beautiful rainbow. Sure enough, whenever you happen to see the two sisters, Hine-kohu and Hine-wai, in accompaniment with the Morning Maiden, you are sure to see Uenuku spanning the heavens in all his glory and near his beloved.

**See also** Moon, Origin of; Rangi and Papa; Sun God; Wākea

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## UNDERWORLD

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia.

The Polynesian underworld is a mysterious and mystical place, a place that normally eludes the view of human beings and one that generally arouses fright and terror in the listener of these ancient tales. The underworld can take on many forms. It is the home of gods and goddesses, the place of origin of the physical world, a dark region where demons and monsters dwell, a place where human spirits go after death, and where ancient heroes perform their mighty feats of courage and bravery.

Most Polynesians place the underworld directly beneath the earth, but some Hawaiian stories say it lies far to the west, under the ocean; Tongans maintain that it lies to the northwest of their island chain; and the Māoris believe it rests at the foot of Cape Rēinga (the extreme north point of New Zealand). Whether it lies to the north or to the west, ancient Polynesians firmly believed that it physically existed, and that on certain occasions humans, as well as other creatures, could travel there and back, if they could only find the proper entrance. In the Māui legend, for example, the entrance is an opening in the ground covered by soil and grass through which Māui's mother travels when she goes back and forth each day. In the Mangaian (Cook Islands) story of Kura and Eneene, it is merely a hole in the ground through which Eneene accidentally falls. In Sāmoa, its entrance is a hollow pit or cave, and at its depths flows a river that carries travelers on to the underworld; and in the Tuamotuan story of Rata, the hero Vahi-vero dives into a pool of water to reach the underworld.

Some legends describe the entrance as having gates or doors, usually guarded by a god or goddess of the underworld, similar to classical mythology in which



Cerberus (a three-headed dog) guards the gates of Hades. In the Tuamotus, children are also told that demons lie in wait along the path of the underworld to try to capture any stray mortals who may venture there.

According to some, the underworld is divided into ten divisions, the lowest of which is presided over by the chief goddess of the underworld herself. This division in the underworld explains why paradise and hell can both be located there, why it is a residing place for both bad and good gods, and why there are many different lands where heroes and demigods battle for victory.

Paradoxically, the underworld is the origin of all mortal ills as well as all that is good. For example, after the separation of Sky Father and Earth Mother, the Māori god Whiro fled to the underworld with his followers where they became the originators of all human ills. These forces became the goblins, ogres, and demons that lie in wait to snare human beings and drag them down to their destruction. But at the same time, the underworld is a place where all that is magical and good resides. The Tongan goddess Faimalie visited the underworld and brought back the yam, and Lohi brought back the taro, both staple foods throughout Polynesia. Māori chief Ihingā brought back charms, songs, and games for New Zealand; Māui located the fire goddess and brought back the secret of making fire for humans; and chief Mataora of New Zealand brought back the important art of body tattooing.

There are many unresolved discrepancies regarding the Polynesians' belief in life after death, but generally they believe the underworld to be a place where all human spirits go after death. Those who have not kept the laws or respected the gods can only look forward to the lowest depths of the underworld, where they are either burned or consumed by the god(dess) Milu (Miru). Generally commoners are placed in this category. Nobles, on the other hand, can look forward to a "paradise," where they are well fed, where the women are beautiful, and where there are no ills or sorrows. Unfortunately, some departed spirits never make their way to the underworld; in this case, they remain on earth, where they become the spirits and ghosts that frighten humans who dare come near their domain.

Many Polynesian stories tell of gods and demigods who traveled back and forth to the underworld, but the number of mortals who traveled there and back safely are much fewer. On Mangaia, for example, Kura fell through a hole into the underworld and was captured by demons, but her husband Eneene followed and eventually saved her. In New Zealand, a tragic story is told of beautiful Pare and chief Hutu. Pare fell in love with Hutu, but he would not return her love. In anguish, Pare hung herself and her spirit traveled to the underworld. Meanwhile, Pare's tribe held Hutu responsible, and to save his own life, he followed her spirit

below. Once there, Hutu had to pass several “tests” before Pare finally agreed to return to earth with him. A similar story is told in Hawai’i, where the rejected Kāwelū strangled herself and her spirit descended to the underworld. Her object of love, Hiku-i-ka-nahele, had a change of heart and followed her. Being reunited below, the two returned to earth, where they lived happily ever after. A Marquesan woman by the name of Kipo-kino was put to death because of her infidelity. Her sisters-in-law, however, set out to the underworld (Havai’i), caught her spirit, and returned it to the upper world, where her spirit entered into a wooden tiki and became mortal once again. Another Marquesan, hero, Kena, set out to find his wife’s spirit in the underworld. Once there, he defeated sirens, ogres, and crushing rocks to rescue his wife. He placed her spirit in a basket to return to earth, however, Kena went against a prescribed *tapu*, peeked inside the basket, and lost his wife once more. Fortunately, he was allowed one more attempt, and this time, he did not break the *tapu*. Several amusing stories tell of mortals whose spirits upset the gods of the underworld so much that they are gratefully expelled. Milimili from the Marquesas, for example, found his soul in the underworld, but he beat a wooden drum so loudly that the gods threw him out. Tinopau, a Bellona Islander, composed such a bad song once he got there that the irate gods simply “yanked” him out.

*See also* Death; Earthquakes; Hina; Māui; Tattoo

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## WĀKEA

Cultural Group: Eastern Polynesia

Wākea (Ātea, Avatea, or Vātea) means “space, universe, light, noon-day.” As a god, he maintains an important ranking in the folklore of Eastern Polynesia (Tahiti, Hawai’i, New Zealand, the Marquesas, and the Tuamotus), but on Mangaia in the Cook Islands, he is given supreme ranking as the father of all the other gods.

Mangaian traditions tell us that Vātea is the first of five sons “born” to the great creator goddess Vari-ma-te-takere (The very beginning), all of whom were “plucked” from her side. Sometimes, Vātea is physically represented as half human and half fish. His assigned home is a land called Papa-rairai, which lies just under the upper world where humans dwell. His two eyes, however, are the sun and the moon, one to watch over the world by day and the other by night. Once while he was asleep, Vātea dreamed of a beautiful goddess, and when he awoke, he set out to find her. After searching far and wide, he finally came to a

cave, which he suspected the fair damsel used as the vehicle to enter and exit his dreams. He set a trap for her, and sure enough when she appeared the next night, he caught her, and made her his wife. Her name was Papa (Foundation) and as the chant continues, "'Twas in the shades Vātea first saw his wife, And fondly pressed her to his bosom" (Gill 1876, 8). Vātea and Papa had many children—gods and goddesses—a set of twins, Tangaora and Rongo, Tonga-iti, Tongi'ia, and Tāne (the last two being the principal gods of Mangaia). All of his children are important in directing the affairs of the universe, and most Polynesians worship them as the most powerful gods in the *ātea* (heavens).

In Hawai'i, some legends suggest that Wākea and his wife, Papa, were the creators of the island of Kahiki (Tahiti?) as well as the Hawaiian Islands. In the distant past, they say, Papa gave birth to a gourd from which Wākea formed a calabash. He threw open its lid and it became the sky. The calabash itself became the land and ocean, its pulp became the sun, its juice became the rain, and its seeds became the stars. Sometime later, Wākea seduced the goddess Hina, and she gave birth to the Hawaiian island of Moloka'i. Other Hawaiian legends maintain that Wākea and his sister-wife Papa-hanau-moku were mortals—the ancestors of the chiefly class (*ali'i*) of Hawai'i—while the children of his two brothers Lihau'ula and Māku'u were the *kahuna* (priests) and *maka'āinana* (commoners).

**See also** Chiefly Class; God Images; Hawaiki; Hina; Kāne; Lono; Moon, Origin of; Ocean; Rangi and Papa; Stars; Sun God; Tāne; Tangaloa; Underworld

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## WARFARE AND WAR GODS—KŪ, 'ORO, NAFANŪA

Cultural Group: All of Polynesia

Warfare was common among all Polynesians. Those few islands that had developed more centralized governments—Tonga, for example—experienced fewer wars than the other islands. But even in Tonga, ancient warfare was frequent, fierce, and savage. As a result, war gods came to play a major role in Polynesian culture, and some war gods ranked among the highest in the pantheon of gods.

War was frequently declared by one tribe or district against another, and on a few occasions, war occurred between different island groups, such as Sāmoa

and Tonga. Reasons for going to war among the ancient Polynesians were numerous, just as in modern times—jealousy of one chief for the possessions of another, murder of a member of another tribe, breaking a treaty or an oath, famine and the competition for food, rebellion of a tribe against its chief, self-aggrandizement, the desire for the love of a beautiful woman, and the list can go on.

When a chief felt he had been wronged or injured, he would call a council of subordinate chiefs and priests to discuss the urgent situation. Designated speakers would present their points of view before the council and the high chief, after which the high chief would make his decision. If it was war, the council would then discuss the logistics and strategies of such a war. The council would then be dismissed and heralds instructed to travel throughout the island to announce the forthcoming war. Although some chiefs kept a few highly respected warriors as retainers, most of the warriors actually came from the general population.

Once they had heard the news of war, men would prepare their weapons for the coming conflict. Their weapons were generally made of ironwood and consisted of various forms and lengths of spears, scythes with shark teeth embedded in the edges in order to disembowel the enemy, clubs, slings, and stones. The type of dress for war varied from the simple *malo* or *maro* (loincloth) worn by the Tongans to the highly decorated clothing of the Tahitians, many of whom wore their finest garments of capes, helmets, and gorgets. Many would oil themselves and decorate their bodies with colorful flowers. Warriors would often construct a type of protective armor by wrapping closely woven sennit around their torsos and by swathing their heads in heavy tapa cloth to prevent deadly blows from the enemy.

The assembled warriors would be accompanied into battle by doctors, priests, and orators whose job it was to encourage the fighting with their songs, chants, and harangues. Women sometimes fought alongside of their husbands in the front lines. Others would accompany the soldiers to care for the wounded and to prepare meals at the end of the day. The old, infirm, and children would be gathered together into certain houses under the protection of designated priests.

Land fighting normally took place in an open field, usually near a beach. Both sides would approach each other according to rank, often to the accompaniment of drumbeats and conch-shell trumpets. Nearby, priests would begin their prayers to the gods, prepare victims for sacrifice, and assist the wounded. The hand-to-hand fighting was fierce and savage; the sole purpose was to beat the enemy to a pulp and thoroughly devastate his lands. Spears and clubs were thrown, and hand weapons tore at the enemy until he fell in battle. The bodies of the enemy were quartered and disemboweled, and the battle scene was one of

carnage. Very few prisoners were taken, and those that were eventually became slaves or sacrifices to the gods, or were murdered. The enemy's lands were pillaged and all food either gathered up and distributed to the victorious chiefs or destroyed. Trophies of skulls, jawbones, or the whole bodies of certain warriors were gathered and taken back home, where they were deposited in the open-air temples, the stench of which could be smelled for long distances.

Fighting sometimes ended in a draw when both sides withdrew either to fight again another day or to negotiate for peace. At other times, one side would send a delegation to the other with tokens of peace—tapa cloth and a branch from the ironwood tree. Councils would then be held to discuss a truce. The assembled delegates sat facing each other and their designated orators discussed terms of peace. When all had been agreed upon, other tokens were exchanged—certain tree branches woven into wreathes and gifts of dogs or pigs. Each side offered up a long strip of tapa cloth, both of which were seamed together to indicate their bond of friendship. Offerings were made to the gods, and both sides swore never to break the established treaty. The assembly ended with feasting, games, and dancing, after which everyone went home. The warriors then cleaned their weapons and hung them up in a sacred part of their huts until they were called out again.

Traditional Polynesian histories are replete with accounts of incessant wars between tribes and island groups, and therefore, preparations for war took up much of the community's time. It is not surprising, therefore, that the war gods of Polynesia maintained a lofty status within the hierarchy of gods. The war god Kū (or Tū) is commonly known throughout many of the islands, including Hawai'i, New Zealand, the Marquesas, and Sāmoa. The words *kū* and *tū* mean "standing tall," "stability," or "rising upright." In Hawai'i, Kū represents one of the most powerful ancestral gods possessing the reproductive or generative power of the universe. One of his many manifestations is Kū-kā'ili-moku, the infamous Hawaiian war and sorcery god whom King Kamehameha I was favoring when Captain Cook first visited the islands in 1778. Several images of the god still exist. The most famous is the impressive wooden one currently located in the British Museum in London, but it originally stood in the sacred Kawaiīae *heiau* (temple) dedicated to the god Kū at Kailua on the Big Island of Hawai'i (see Illustration 3.48). A smaller wooden image that was said to have been the personal god of Kamehameha I and to have been in his family for generations is shown in Illustration 3.49. This roughly carved statue (22 inches [56 centimeters] high) once was adorned with yellow feathers (now lost) and used to accompany the king in his many battles. Accounts say that the wooden god would



*Illustration 3.48: The war god Kū from the heiau at Pu‘uhonua-o-Honaunau, island of Hawai‘i. (Michael T. Sedam/CORBIS)*



*Illustration 3.49: Hawaiian wooden image, claimed by King Kalākaua to be Kū-kā'ili-moku, the war god of King Kamehameha I, made of kauila wood. (Bishop Museum)*

utter shrieking cries that could be heard above the clash of weapons of the fighters during the battles. Other visual representations of Hawai'i's war god existed. The richly colored feathered "heads" of ancient Hawai'i were also said to have been dedicated to him.

The ancient Tahitians knew Tū as a great god who assisted in the creation of the universe and humans. But they also had several war gods—Tāne, Hiro, 'Ere-'ere-fenua, and 'Oro. They say the powerful god Tāne (Kāne) became a war god only after he had tasted human flesh, and Hiro was recognized by several islands as their war god. The goddess 'Ere-'ere-fenua (black land) brought destruction in her path, including violent storms and wars. But it was the war god 'Oro that came to dominate the entire Tahitian cosmogony. He is

not only considered the most powerful god in the Tahitian pantheon, he is considered *the* god. His worship developed hundreds of years ago, first on the island of Rā'iatea and then spread through most of the islands by the Arioi Society. 'Oro was originally the god of peace, the son of the creator god Ta'aroa and his wife Hina-tū-a-uta. Sometime in the fourteenth century, his position in the hierarchy of gods increased to such an extent that he outshone his father and took over as the supreme god of the famous Taputapuatea *marae* on Rā'iatea. His character changed from that of a peaceful god to that of war, and it is said that his three daughters, To'i-mata, 'Ai-tūpuai, and Mahu-fatu-rau, accompanied him into battle.



‘Oro’s recognition spread to numerous far-flung Polynesian islands, some say as far away as New Zealand, Rotuma (between Fiji and Tonga), and the Austral Islands (south of Tahiti). Legends state that up until about 1350, these islands routinely sent several double-hulled canoes filled with sacrifices, offerings, and gifts to ‘Oro’s *marae* on Rā‘iatea. Foreign priests and chiefs would meet in a type of convention for several days, the times of which were decided upon and publicized far in advance. On the designated day, the gift-laden canoes would sail through the pass of Te-ava-moa into the lagoon at ‘Opoa on Rā‘iatea amidst the loud trumpet sounds from the conch shells and the throbbing beats of the great drums. The local high chiefs and priests would welcome the visitors and supervise the unloading of the various sacrifices (human and animal). The sacrifices would be strung up around the *marae*, while the various gifts were carried into the open space of the *marae*. Sacrificial prayers would be made to ‘Oro, such as:

Now eat of thy long-legged fish [reference to humans], ‘Oro-mata-‘oa!  
 O my king. Eat of thy fish of the sea, my king, ‘Oro-tauā (Fighting-warrior);  
 Welcome to you, O host of gods, in coming here to ‘Oro in his home;  
 The home of all the gods. Hail to the gods! (Henry 1928, 124–125.)

The belief in offering animal and/or human sacrifices was that the sacrifices were the foods for the gods. The ancient people of the Middle East had similar beliefs. Their burnt sacrifices were also offered for the sole purpose of “feeding” their gods. Contrary to the highly sculpted figure of Kū in Hawai‘i, the earthly image of the Tahitian ‘Oro consisted of a simple ironwood club, five to six feet long, and wrapped with hand-woven sennit (rope). This simple object was then decorated with sacred yellow, red, and black feathers and would be housed in the *marae* in a special receptacle, only to be brought out on very sacred occasions. Prayers and orations would then be performed within the *marae* by the various priests in attendance. Several days of activities followed, consisting of discussion and negotiations of alliances, feasting, entertaining, and dancing. Finally, the event was over, and all the guests gathered up and sailed back to their home islands, but not before a new date had been set for the next get-together. No other god in all of Polynesia demanded as much as ‘Oro.

The ancient Samoans, however, did not know the Tahitian god ‘Oro, and although they did have a god named Tū, he was not their war god. It was Nafanūa, a female deity, who surprisingly became their mighty goddess of war. Like most Polynesians, the Samoans never questioned her sex as a war deity, and when once she was aroused, Nafanūa’s wrath was much more destructive than that of

her male counterparts. One of several legends says that Nafanūa was the daughter of Savea-si'uleo, god of the underworld, and his wife, Taemā. The ancient legend says that Nafanūa was born prematurely and that her mother tenderly wrapped the blood clot up and buried it in the garden. A few days later, people passing nearby heard its cries, discovered the baby, named her Nafanūa (hid in the earth), and reared her as their own.

As she became older, she and her mother were reunited. When she asked about her father, Taemā told her that he was living in Sāmoa, at Falealupo, and was under subjection of enemy tribes to the east. Nafanūa convinced her mother to travel with her to Sāmoa and help free her father. After several other adventures along the way, they finally reached Falealupo. They met two young boys on the seashore and sent them to fetch their fathers. Upon hearing of the strange women, the men rushed home and introduced themselves to the two goddesses. While they were talking, Nafanūa heard loud sounds coming from afar, and she asked the men what they were. They told her that they were a subjugated people, and the cries were from the cruelties that they were suffering. The two goddess, therefore, devised a plan to free the people. They told the men of the village to approach their conquerors and cry out, "Get out. We are revolting against you!" Of course, this angered the conquerors; they immediately met in council and declared war upon their subjects once again. According to their plan, the goddesses stood their ground on one side of the road, while all the men of the village held the other. As the enemy forces approached, they were picked off one by one, until they were entirely defeated. Savea-si'uleo and his fellow villagers were now the conquerors. From this time forward, Nafanūa was recognized throughout Sāmoa as the supreme goddess of war.

*See also:* Arioi Society; Cannibalism and Human Sacrifices; Ceremonies, Religious; Chiefly Class; God Images; Kāne; Priests; Temples

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# ANNOTATED PRINT SOURCES

## MYTHOLOGICAL SOURCES AND COMMENTARIES

Alpers, Antony. *The World of the Polynesians: Seen through Their Myths and Legends, Poetry and Art*. Auckland, NZ: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Originally published in 1970 as *Legends of the South Seas*, Alpers's work (415 pages) includes Polynesian legends and myths from a variety of islands that have never been published before.

Andersen, Johannes C. *Myths and Legends of the Polynesians*. London: Harrap, 1928.

Andersen's charming style in the retelling of numerous Polynesian myths in 500 pages makes this volume worthy of republishing time after time. Andersen, a Dane, was awarded the British Royal Society Medal for Ethnology in 1944 for his lifelong devotion to Polynesian mythology and especially for his work as editor (1925–1947) of the prestigious *Journal of the Polynesian Society*. The numerous romantic illustrations scattered throughout the book were created by the artist Richard Wallwork.

Beckwith, Martha. *Hawaiian Mythology*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940.

Considered one of the best single sources for its summaries and scholarly commentaries on Hawaiian myths as well as for its references to the other islands of Polynesia. The popular volume has gone through numerous reprints and is published in paperback. Also recommended is Beckwith's translation of *The Kumulipo: A Hawaiian Creation Chant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) and her "Romance of Laieikawai" by S. N. Haleoli (1863) in the *Thirty-third Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (1919), pp. 285–666.

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Born in New Zealand, Best (1856–1931) worked as a road foreman and later as a government health inspector, where he came into contact with local Māori people who shared their traditional histories and mythology with him. His collection was published in 2 volumes and is considered one of his best works among his other 25 published books and 50 papers.

Buck, Peter H. *Vikings of the Sunrise*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1938.

One of the most readable and fascinating prehistories ever written on Polynesia. Born in New Zealand, Buck (1880–1951) became a doctor and health administrator before joining the faculty of Harvard University and the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu. His *Vikings* recounts the fabulous story of the migration of the ancient Polynesians across the vast Pacific Ocean. The volume has gone through numerous reprints, even in paperback.

Collocott, Ernest E. V. *Tales and Poems of Tonga*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1928.

Collocott's small monograph (170 pages) includes a wealth of local lore, songs, and stories that augments the more extensive work of Edward W. Gifford (listed later in this section).

Craig, Robert D. *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.

A comprehensive dictionary of mythological figures (gods, goddesses, and ancient heroes) including brief summaries of myths, legends, and stories. The volume is indexed and cross-referenced for easy use.

Ellis, William. *Polynesian Researches*. 2 vols. London: Fisher, Son, and Jackson, 1829.

Ellis served as a Christian missionary to Polynesia between 1816 and 1822. While there, he gathered extensive ethnographic data on Hawai'i, French Polynesia, and New Zealand. He published the data when he returned to England. His several volumes, which include several references to local legends, serve as first-hand accounts of the islands just at the time of Westernization.

Emerson, Nathaniel B. *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii. The Sacred Songs of the Hula*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1909.

Emerson is considered one of the finest collectors and translators of traditional Hawaiian literature. His *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii* is still considered *the* authoritative source for the history and culture of the songs and dances of ancient Hawai'i. Some of his recorded legends exist nowhere else in print. His other work, *Pele and Hiiaka, a Myth from Hawaii* (Honolulu: Honolulu Star Bulletin, 1915), is regarded by some as one of the finest in the world.

Fornander, Abraham. *Account of the Polynesian Race*. 3 vols. London: Trubner, 1878–1885; *Fornander Collection of Hawaiian Antiquities and Folklore*. 3 vols. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1916–1920.

Fornander (1813–1887) was born in Sweden, but lived most of his life in the islands, where he married a local Hawaiian chieftainess. In his *Account*, Fornander pieces together the ancient history of Hawai'i by combining legends, language, and folklore. His *Collection* in 3 volumes remains one of the greatest repositories of Hawaiian folklore. It was edited and published many years after his death.

Forster, Johann. 1778. *Observations Made during a Voyage round the World*. London: G. Robinson.

Forster (1729–1798) was a German naturalist who became the first academic expert on Pacific subjects. Although a clergyman, his interests lay in science, philosophy, and linguistics (he read 17 different languages). He was living in England when he was appointed scientist and naturalist to Captain James Cook's second voyage around the world (1772–1775). His meticulous details of his observations of Pacific peoples and their cultures during his voyage aided in the later development of the field of anthropology.

Gifford, Edward W. *Tongan Myths and Tales*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1924.

Gifford spent 9 months (1920–1921) with the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum staff in Tonga collecting the myths and tales that were published in his 200-page monograph. Some of the tales are printed in Tongan with their English translation, and the work still remains one of the very few sources on ancient Tongan mythology.

Gill, William Wyatt. *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific*. London: Henry S. King, 1876.

In 1851 at the age of 23, Gill set out from England as a Christian missionary

to Mangaia in the Cook Islands. He learned the indigenous language thoroughly, and for more than 22 years, he collected numerous traditional stories that he published in 1876. His collection's stories of the hero Māui served as a reference for subsequent storytellers. Reprint editions of his work are still available, such as the 1977 edition by Arno Press in New York.

Grey, George. *Polynesian Mythology and Ancient Traditional History of the Māori as Told by Their Priests and Chiefs*. London: A. D. Willis, 1855.

Grey (1812–1898) represents one of the first Westerners to become interested in Māori traditions and folklore and to set them down in writing before they became lost. His publication in 1855 provided Europeans with their first popular acquaintance with Polynesian mythology. His text is currently available via the Internet at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/pac/grey/index.htm>. It contains the popular Māori stories of the separation of Sky Father and Earth Mother, the war among their children, the creation of animal and human life, the stories of the ancient heroes, and the ultimate migration of the Māori from Hawaiki to New Zealand.

Handy, Edward S. C. *Marquesan Legends*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1930.

Handy and his wife, Willowdean Chatterton Handy, traveled to the Marquesas Islands (1920–1921) as part of a Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum expedition, organized to gather whatever extant materials might be available on the traditional history, ethnography, and folklore of the Marquesas. Fortunately, Handy was able to locate a learned islander who provided him with extensive notes for his publication. Many of the legends published in this 140-page monograph are printed in Marquesan accompanied with their English translation. These are the very few ancient Marquesan legends that have survived into modern times. Mrs. Handy became equally as important as a result of her pen and ink drawings of the many tattoo designs she observed while there. Her book, *Forever the Land of Men: An Account of a Visit to the Marquesas Islands* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1965), details her personal encounter with a people who had experienced a tragic and devastating encounter with Westerners.

Henry, Teuira. *Ancient Tahiti*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1928.

Granddaughter of an English missionary to Tahiti, Henry (1847–1915) grew up in Tahiti speaking English, Tahitian, and French. She spent most of her later life collecting and editing the ethnographic work left by her father, the

Reverend John Orsmond. Before his death in 1856, Orsmond had systematically collected thousands of oral traditions from chiefs, priests, and other important islanders. The final work, *Ancient Tahiti*, was published after Henry's death by the Bishop Museum. Half of its 600 pages contains many quotations both in Tahitian and English translation. The novelist James Michener considered *Ancient Tahiti* one of the finest books ever published in Hawai'i. It continues to be available in paperback and reprint editions such as the 1985 edition by Kraus Reprint and a 1993 French translation.

Kalākaua, David. *The Legends and Myths of Hawaii*. Edited by Rollin M. Daggett. New York: C. L. Webster, 1888.

King Kalākaua's book is primarily historical and political, but about one-sixth of its 530 pages contains stories of ancient Hawaiian folklore. Although Kalākaua (1836–1891) is the named author, the volume was probably the work of the Honorable R. M. Daggett, U.S. minister to the Hawaiian Islands. It is an interesting book, but very few references are given for the sources of the legends.

Kamakau, Samuel M. *Tales and Traditions of the People of Old*. Translated by Mary Kawena Puku'i. Edited by Dorothy B Barrère. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1993.

Considered the best writer on Hawaiian traditions, Kamakau (1815–1876) left a collection of his newspaper articles, consisting of traditions and legends, that remained untranslated and unpublished until 1993. The articles in this volume of 184 pages were translated by Mary Kawena Puku'i and edited by Dorothy B. Barrère, both renowned Hawaiian scholars.

Kirtley, Bacil F. *Motif-Index of Traditional Polynesian Narratives*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1971.

An indispensable reference volume (486 pages) that provides cross-references to almost all of the many themes and figures appearing in Polynesian myths and legends.

Krämer, Augustin F. *Die Samoa-Inseln*. 2 vols. Stuttgart: E. Schweitzerbart, 1902–1903. Translated by Theodore Verhaaren as *The Samoan Islands*. 2 vols. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994–1995.

Krämer's monumental work is considered the foremost authority on ancient Samoan traditions and history. As a German ethnologist, Krämer spent 4 years in the Pacific (1893–1895 and 1897–1899), where he collected a vast amount of ethnographic data on the Samoan Islands, at that time



under German administration. The book remained available only in German until recently, when it was translated and published in English.

Luomala, Katharine. *Voices on the Wind: Polynesian Myths and Chants*.

Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1955.

An extremely well-written and enjoyable retelling of several of the most popular Polynesian legends, including the exploits of the famous heroes Tinirau, Rata, Tahaki, and Māui. Joseph Feher illustrated the monograph with bold black-and-white drawings that resemble block prints. Luomala's *Mauui of a Thousand Tricks* (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1949) and her *Menehune of Polynesia and Other Little People of Oceania* (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1951) are also recommended.

Métraux, Alfred. *Ethnology of Easter Island*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1940.

Métraux's monographs are regarded as the best books ever written on the ethnology and history of Easter Island. In 1934 as a Swiss anthropologist, he joined a scientific expedition to the island whose purpose was to investigate the ancient customs and religion of the islanders. His *Ethnology* contains more than 400 pages.

Moerenhout, Jacques A. *Voyages aux îles du grand océan*. 2 vols. in one. Paris: Bertrand, 1837. Translated by Arthur R. Borden Jr. as *Travels to the Islands of the Pacific Ocean*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993.

Moerenhout (1796–1879) was a Belgian merchant who came to Tahiti in 1828 and remained there for 20 years. His 1837 publication includes numerous references to ancient legends, traditions, and stories, some of which are found nowhere else. It was translated into English by Arthur R. Borden and published in the United States in 1993.

Orbell, Margaret Rose. *A Concise Encyclopedia of Māori Myth and Legend*.

Christchurch, NZ: Canterbury University Press, 1998.

One of the most respected contemporary writers of Māori myths and legends, Orbell has produced one of the best single-volume encyclopedic works on Māori myths, legends, folklore, and religious beliefs. The work is a culmination of many years of academic research and writing on the subject. The book is illustrated throughout with important drawings and historical photographs.

Reed, Alexander Wyclif. *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Maori Life*. Auckland, NZ: A. W. Reed, 1963; *Maori Tales of Long Ago*. Wellington, NZ: A. W. Reed, 1957; *Maui, Legends of the Demi-gods of Polynesia*. Wellington, NZ: A. W. Reed, 1943; *Myths and Legends of Polynesia*. Illustrated by Roger Hart. Wellington, NZ: A. W. Reed, 1974

Reed (1908–1979), a New Zealand–born writer, established the publishing company of A. W. Reed and wrote numerous monographs on Māori themes and biographical studies. The ones listed immediately above are his most significant.

Rice, William H. *Hawaiian Legends*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1923.

Born in Hawai'i (1846) to early missionary teachers, Rice spent his early years learning Hawaiian and listening to the tales told to him by the old Hawaiians. In his later years, he became the last governor of the island of Kaua'i before U.S. annexation, and after being pressed by his associates, he set down in writing the English translations of the tales he had heard. The small volume finally appeared in 1923.

Routledge, Katherine S. *Mystery of Easter Island*. London: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1919.

An Australian archaeologist, Routledge first visited Easter Island in 1913 through 1915 as part of the Mana Expedition, where she recorded for the first time detailed accounts of the island's ancient statues, petroglyphs, writing tablets, and way of life. Her 400-page account appeared in 1919 and contains hundreds of photographs and engravings. She had planned an even more massive scientific volume before her death in 1935.

Shortland, Edward. *Maori Religion and Mythology*. London: Longmans Green, 1882; *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*. London: Longmans Green, 1856.

Shortland's valuable summary, *Maori Religion and Mythology* (112 pages), is currently available online at the Internet Sacred Text Archive (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/pac/mrm/>).

Stair, John B. *Old Samoa or Flotsam and Jetsam from the Pacific Ocean*. London: Religious Tract Society, 1897.

Stair's book includes sections on the people of Sāmoa, political life, social and domestic habits, amusements, trades, employments, marriages, births,

deaths, natural history, mythology, wars and warfare, and Samoan voyages and settlement.

Steinen, Karl von den. *Von den Steinen's Marquesan Myths*. Translated by Marta Langridge. Canberra, Australia: Target Oceania/Journal of Pacific History, 1988.

A medical doctor, Steinen (1855–1929) visited the Marquesas Islands in the 1890s and became enthralled with their cultures and customs. He learned their language and then set down into writing some of the tales and genealogies narrated to him by the old men and women of the islands. Many of his notes were published throughout his life in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* and the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*. His German collection, *Marquesanische Mythen*, appeared posthumously in 1933 (Berlin: J. Springer) and this English translation by Marta Langridge appeared in 1988.

Steubel, C. *Tala o le Vavau: Myths, Legends and Customs of Old Sāmoa, adapted from the collections of C. Steubel, A. Krämer, and Brother Herman*. Illustrated by Iosua Toafa. Rev. ed. Auckland, NZ: Pasifika Press, 1995.

Steubel was a German consul in Sāmoa from 1884 to 1894, during which time he collected this book of myths, legends, and customs of the Samoan people. The collection was translated by Brother Herman of the Marist Brothers, who came to Sāmoa in 1914 and remained until his death in 1970. The legends include the creation story and the deeds of gods and heroes, as well as descriptions of various Samoan customs—punishments, incest, marriage, polygamy, theft, and so on.

Stimson, John F. *Songs and Tales of the Sea Kings*. Edited by Donald Marshall. Salem, MA: Peabody Museum, 1957.

A long resident in the islands of the Pacific, Stimson (1883–1958) learned fluently the various Polynesian dialects spoken in French Polynesia. He sailed among the islands collecting stories and chants offered to him from many individuals, including the late Queen Marau (1860–1934) of Tahiti. His records were published in several works, including the *Legends of Maui and Tahaki* (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1934) and the *Tuamotuan Legends: Island of Anaa* (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1937). His *Sea Kings* offers a wonderful collection of Polynesian poetry in English translation.

Thrum, Thomas G., ed. *Hawaiian Folk Tales: A Collection of Native Legends*. Chicago: McClurg, 1907. Reprint, *Hawaiian Folk Tales: A Collection of Native Legends*. Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 1998; *More Hawaiian Folk Tales*. Chicago: McClurg, 1923.

Thrum (1842–1932) was a prolific collector and publisher of Hawaiian antiquities. His own 2 volumes of Hawaiian folk tales were compiled from stories that had appeared years before in Hawaiian-language newspapers. Thrum also was responsible for editing the vast Abraham Fornander *Collection* (listed previously) published by the Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press between 1916 and 1920.

Tregear, Edward. *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary*. Wellington, NZ: Government Printer, 1891.

An outstanding public servant in New Zealand, Tregear (1846–1931) was active in Māori scholarship throughout his life. His *Dictionary* not only serves as an important linguistic dictionary for the Māori language, but as a substantial guide to Māori mythology as well. Many of his entries are names of Māori mythological figures, which he then fully details and compares to similar figures in other Polynesian groups. Tregear's 600-page *Māori Race* (Wanganui, NZ: A. D. Willis, 1904) also remains a standard reference for details on traditional Māori culture and customs.

Turner, George. *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*. London: J. Snow, 1861; *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*. London: Macmillan, 1884.

One of the first collectors of Samoan folklore, Turner (1818–1891) served as a missionary to Sāmoa for 19 years, during which he collected data on Sāmoa's ancient culture and religion. His subsequent book became one of the most important works on Samoan culture.

Westervelt, William D. *Legends of Ma-ui, a Demigod of Polynesia, and of His Mother Hina*. Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette, 1910; *Hawaiian Legends of Ghosts and Ghost-Gods*. Boston: G. H. Ellis, 1915. Reprint, Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 1998; *Hawaiian Legends of Old Honolulu*. Boston: G. H. Ellis, 1915; *Hawaiian Legends of Volcanoes*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1963.

Westervelt (1849–1939) was a prodigious writer of Hawaiian folklore. His articles and books total over 1,000 pages. He collected an extensive Hawaiian library and became an authority on traditional Hawaiian customs. His volumes, though small in size, contain an enormous amount of fascinating

details, ranging from the gods and creation, to the spirits and ghosts that inhabit the islands, to the legends of the most famous Polynesian hero of all—Māui.

White, John. *The Ancient History of the Maori, His Mythology and Traditions*. 6 vols. Wellington, NZ: George Didsbury, 1887–1891.

White (1826–1891) published a 6-volume reference work on Māori myths and traditions that has essentially become the standard in New Zealand. It is the fullest and richest account ever published on the subject. Because of his superb command of the Māori language, White was frequently called upon to act as an official interpreter for various New Zealand administrators, and the government commissioned him to compile this work.

Williamson, Robert W. *Religious and Cosmic Beliefs of Central Polynesia*. 2 vols. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1933; *Religion and Social Organization in Central Polynesia*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1937.

Williamson's 2 scholarly volumes are detailed discussions of the religious, mythological, and social beliefs of almost all of the Polynesian islands. He discusses the many varieties of creation chants, describes the major Polynesian deities generally recognized throughout all the islands, and then offers details on the unique island gods specific to each island group.

## **PREHISTORY—GENERAL POLYNESIA**

Barclay, Glen St. John. *A History of the Pacific from the Stone Age to the Present*. New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1978.

Published the same year as Peter Bellwood's volume (immediately below), this less-pretentious volume summarizes the available scientific data on the peopling of the Pacific from the earliest times in Australia (500,000 B.C.) to the coming of the Polynesians about 1300 B.C.

Bellwood, Peter S. *Man's Conquest of the Pacific: The Prehistory of Southeast Asia and Oceania*. London: Collins, 1978.

Archaeologist Bellwood presents one of the most comprehensive syntheses of scientific data (archaeological, anthropological, linguistic, etc.) for the settlement of the Pacific Ocean in his folio 450-page volume. A shortened version written for the layperson appeared as *The Polynesians: Prehistory*

*of an Island People* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978. Revised, London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).

Buck, Peter H. *Vikings of the Sunrise*. New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1938.

One of the most respected and distinguished Pacific scholars from New Zealand, Buck (1880–1951) offers a well-written volume on the migrations of the Polynesians across the Pacific based to a great extent on the use of oral traditions and genealogies. Buck suggests the origin of the Polynesians was in India, with a migration through Micronesia before settling elsewhere. The volume has been reprinted numerous times, even in paperback.

Craig, Robert D. *Historical Dictionary of Polynesia*. 2d ed. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

Although the focus is on modern historical times, this single volume offers a general introduction to Polynesia, its culture and history.

Goldman, Irving. *Ancient Polynesian Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Drawing upon a wide range of professional data, this book of 600 pages is one of the most comprehensive summaries of all ancient Polynesian societies. Goldman discusses in detail the aristocratic nature of the island governments, kinship, social relations, government, economy, and ritual.

Heyerdahl, Thor. *Kon-Tiki Expedition*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1950;  
*American Indians in the Pacific: The Theory Behind the Kon-Tiki Expedition*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1953.

Heyerdahl (1914–2002) gained worldwide fame in 1947 when he drifted from South America to the islands of Polynesia aboard his balsa raft *Kon-Tiki* to prove that the Polynesians first originated in the Americas. Although subsequent scientific research has proved this untenable, Heyerdahl's books continue to be read for the vast scope and energy expended in proving his theory.

Jennings, Jesse D., ed. *The Prehistory of Polynesia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

American cultural anthropologist/archaeologist, Jennings presents a dozen essays, by well-known specialists in their fields, that summarize the known data on prehistoric Polynesia. Jennings became interested in the Pacific as a result of his excavations in Sāmoa during the 1970s. Seven of the 15 chapters are devoted to island-group surveys (Sāmoa, Tonga, the Mar-

quesas, Easter Island, Hawai'i, the Society Islands, and New Zealand), and the remaining 8 are on general topics such as language, physical anthropology, settlement patterns, and the like.

Lewis, David. *From Maui to Cook: The Discovery and Settlement of the Pacific*. Sydney: Doubleday Australia, 1977; *The Voyaging Stars: Secrets of the Pacific Island Navigators*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1978.

Lewis remains one of the foremost authorities on ancient seafaring by the early Pacific peoples. His books detail how these apparently "simple" people sailed from one island to the other in their double-hulled canoes by the use of their extensive knowledge of the winds, ocean currents, birds, stars, and heavenly bodies.

Oliver, Douglas. *Oceania: The Native Cultures of Australia and the Pacific Islands*. 2 vols. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1988.

Considered the "dean" of Pacific anthropology, Oliver presents one of the most detailed summaries of the prehistorical cultures of Australia and the Pacific Islands. His many other books on Pacific peoples and cultures continue to be required readings on many university campuses.

Smith, A. Percy. *Hawaiki, The Original Home of the Maori: With a Sketch of Polynesian History*. 3d ed. London: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1910.

Depending on traditions and genealogies collected from Rarotonga, Smith (1840–1922) traces the Polynesian origins back to India via Indonesia and Fiji.

Suggs, Robert C. *The Island Civilizations of Polynesia*. New York: New American Library, 1960.

A most interesting volume on the settlement of the Pacific by the Polynesians. Suggs is a severe critic of Thor Heyerdahl (cited previously), and he claims that the Marquesas and Tahiti were the origins of the peoples in the eastern Pacific (Easter Island, Hawai'i, Mangareva, the Tuamotus, New Zealand). He is also critical of accepting Polynesian legends as a matter of fact without questioning their origins and verity.

Thorne, Alan, and Robert Raymond. *Man on the Rim: The Peopling of the Pacific*. Sydney and London: Angus & Robertson, 1989.

Written at the request of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, this volume by Thorne and Raymond is a very readable account of the prehistory of all human origins from their first appearance in the African continent to the settlement of the Pacific and Polynesia many years later.



## PREHISTORY—COOK ISLANDS

Buck, Peter H. *Mangaian Society*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1934; *The Material Culture of the Cook Islands*. New Plymouth, NZ: Avery, 1927. Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1976.

Two of the very few studies that offer information regarding the prehistory of the Cook Islands, written by a most distinguished Pacific scholar—Sir Peter Buck (1880–1951)—who served on the staff of the Bishop Museum from 1927 until his death. He published numerous archeological and ethnological studies about the islands of Polynesia.

Gill, William W. *Historical Sketches of Savage Life in Polynesia*. Wellington, NZ: Government Printer, 1880.

Gill (1828–1896) wrote numerous books on Polynesia, and in his *Historical Sketches*, he presents numerous ancient traditions from the island of Mangaia in the Cook Islands. These provide a basis for a more detailed understanding of the prehistory of the islands.

## PREHISTORY—EASTER ISLAND

Barthel, Thomas S. *The Eighth Land: The Polynesian Discovery and Settlement of Easter Island*. Translated by Anneliese Martin. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1978.

This 372-page volume attempts to reconstruct Easter Island prehistory in light of a modern indigenous manuscript, called “Manuscript E” (reproduced on pages 304–306). The work was originally written in German and is primarily a reference work rather than a readable and enjoyable text.

Englert, Sebastian. *Island at the Center of the World: New Light on Easter Island*. Translated and edited by William Mulloy. New York: Charles Scribner's, 1970.

Father Englert (1888–1969) was a monk who settled on Easter Island in 1936. He studied the language, published a grammar and dictionary, and in this volume summarizes his extensive studies of the language, presents data on the island's past, and describes the many *moai* statues and ancient island artifacts. The book remains a major source for Easter Island ethnology.

Fischer, Steven Roger. *Rongorongo: The Easter Island Script, History, Traditions, Texts*. New York: Clarendon Press, 1997.

When this monograph appeared in 1997, it was the only comprehensive documentation of Easter Island's *rongorongo* script (the only known ancient Polynesian written language, which had remained a mystery since its discovery a century before). Controversy over the translation of the *rongorongo* tablets raged during the years, and it was reported in 1997 that Fischer had successfully deciphered this unique Pacific language. This volume is the culmination of his work.

Heyerdahl, Thor. *Aku-Aku: The Secret of Easter Island*. New York: Rand McNally, 1958. Reprint, London: Unwin, 1989; *Easter Island: The Mystery Solved*. New York: Random House, 1989.

After his famous raft drift from South America to the islands of Polynesia (1947) to prove a South American origin for the Polynesians, Heyerdahl (1914–2002) embarked on numerous other archeological studies, including a visit to Easter Island in 1955–1956 to study the *moai* (statues) and traditional artifacts. The result was the publication of several volumes describing in great detail the archeological remains on the islands and his interpretation of the ancient history of the Rapanui (Easter Islanders).

Métraux, Alfred. *Easter Island: A Stone-Age Civilization of the Pacific*. Translated by Michael Bullock. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.

Besides his *Ethnology of Easter Island* (listed in the “Mythological Sources and Commentaries” section previously in this chapter), Métraux's *Stone-Age Civilization* is considered the best single book on the “mystery” of Easter Island. Métraux led a Franco-Belgian expedition to the island in 1934 and 1935 to systematically record ethnography data. He collected all the accounts he could find, and it is upon his versions of the traditions that most other histories of the island are based.

## PREHISTORY—FRENCH POLYNESIA

Craig, Robert D., ed. *The Marquesas Islands: Their Description and Early History, by the Reverend Robert Thomson*. 2d ed. Lā'ie, HI: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1980; *Tahitian Society before the Arrival of the Europeans by Edmond de Bovis*. Translated by Robert D. Craig. 2d ed. Lā'ie, HI: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1980.

Written in the nineteenth century, these two small monographs describe life in the Marquesas Islands and Tahiti prior to European contact.

Ellis, William. *Polynesian Researches: Society Islands*. 2 vols. London: Fisher, Son, and Jackson, 1829. Revised edition, 4 vols. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1969.

English missionary Ellis (1794–1872) came to the Society Islands (now French Polynesia) in 1817 and introduced the first printing press to the Pacific. He made copious notes during his years of work, and after his return to England, he published his *Researches*, which includes geographical and historical data, descriptions of the traditional culture of the islands, the introduction and growth of Christianity, and miscellaneous tidbits about the islands (including Hawai‘i). The volume has gone through numerous reprints.

Ferdon, Edwin N. *Early Tahiti as the Explorers Saw It, 1767–1797*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1981.

Ferdon offers a detailed summary of the ethnography of the island of Tahiti at the time of European contact in the late eighteenth century.

Gleizal, Christian, ed. *Encyclopédie de la polynésie française*. 9 vols. Pape‘ete: C. Gleizal/Multipress, 1986–1989.

Although in French, this is considered the most valuable single reference on French Polynesia. The volume titles include: (1) The Oceanic Islands, (2) Flora and Fauna (land), (3) The Sea World, (4) Research on Ancient Polynesia, (5) Daily Life in Ancient Polynesia, (6) Polynesia Is Opened to the World (1769–1842), (7) France and Polynesia, 1842–1960, and (8) and (9) Life in Polynesia. The volumes are profusely illustrated and include maps.

Henry, Teuira. *Ancient Tahiti*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1928. Reprint, Kraus Reprints, 1985.

Henry’s work (650 pages) is the primary source for island history and culture in ancient times. Numerous reprints exist, the most recent cited above. It is highly recommended. (See more details in the annotation in the “Mythological Sources and Commentaries” section previously in this chapter.)

Oliver, Douglas L. *Ancient Tahitian Society*. 3 vols. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1974.

Oliver offers a 3-volume, detailed summary of ancient Tahitian society based upon the records left by the explorers, beachcombers, missionaries, visitors to the islands, and the few Tahitian writers who left accounts of their ancestors. Oliver quotes lengthy passages from his sources, and as a result, the reader seldom has to refer back to the original source.

## **PREHISTORY—HAWAI'I**

Daws, Gavan. *Shoal of Time: History of the Hawaiian Islands*. New York: Macmillan, 1968.

Considered the best single-volume history of the Hawaiian Islands, although it is somewhat dated and needs revisions.

Ellis, William. *A Narrative of a Tour through Hawaii*. London: Fisher, Son, and Jackson, 1826. Reprint, Honolulu: Advertiser Publishing, 1963.

As an English missionary, Ellis (1794–1872) toured Hawai'i in 1823. He recorded detailed descriptions (440 pages) of the geography, history, ethnology, and customs of the Hawaiians. This valuable account of the "Sandwich Islands" has been reprinted many times (under variant titles) and forms an important part of his larger work *Polynesian Researches* (listed previously in the "Mythological Sources and Commentaries" section of this chapter).

Fornander, Abraham. *An Account of the Polynesian Race: Its Origins and Migrations and the Ancient History of the Hawaiian People to the Times of Kamehameha I*. 3 vols. London: Trubner, 1878–1885. Reprint, Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1969.

Fornander (1812–1887) came to Hawai'i in 1823 and worked as a coffee planter, surveyor, publishing editor, and judge. In his *Account*, Fornander uses folklore and language to prove the origin and migrations of the Polynesian people. He then uses legends, various other stories, and genealogies to offer a history of the Hawaiian people, often, however, selecting those sources that prove his theories and rejecting those that did not.

Ii, John Papa. *Fragments of Hawaiian History*. Translated by Mary Kawena Puku'i and edited by Dorothy B. Barrère. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1959. Last reprinted as the fourth edition in Honolulu by Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press in 1983.

Born in Hawai'i about 1800, Ii began collecting and writing stories for the *Ku'oko'a* newspaper during the 1860s. His work primarily deals with Hawaiian history from the time of King Kamehameha (1758–1819), but he also makes references to more ancient times throughout his text. His work (185 pages) was translated into English and finally published only in 1959.

Kamakau, Samuel M. *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*. Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 1961. Revised ed., Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 1991 (Translation of his “Ka moolelo o Kamehameha I.” Articles originally published in *Ka nupepa Kuokoa*, 1866–1869).

Besides his *Tales and Traditions of the People of Old* (listed in the “Mythological Sources and Commentaries” section earlier in this chapter), Kamakau also left a rich trove of historical tales and biographies of the important chiefs of old Hawai'i. Most of these appeared as articles in the nineteenth-century newspaper the *Ku'oko'a*, all in Hawaiian. Various translations of the texts were collected and reviewed by Hawaiian scholar Mary Puku'i, and they were published in a large volume (513 pages) in 1961. Although interesting, many of the texts were based upon fabricated stories by other authors during the nineteenth century, and therefore, the reader must be wary of accepting all of them at face value.

## PREHISTORY—NEW ZEALAND

Belich, James. *Making People: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996.

Belich is considered a prominent, contemporary New Zealand historian. His book *Making People* (nearly 500 pages) recounts the history of the Māori before European contact up through the late nineteenth century, often done through a delightful use of puns and sometimes straightforward humor. His second volume, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, appeared in 2001 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press).

Best, Elsdon. *The Maori*. 2 vols. Wellington, NZ: Polynesian Society, 1924.

Best is regarded as one of the finest scholars of the early New Zealand Māori. His 2-volume descriptive study provides valuable details on ancient New Zealand culture and history.

Buck, Peter H. *The Coming of the Maori*. Wellington, NZ: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1949. Revised ed., Wellington, NZ: Māori Purposes Fund Board, 1966.

Besides his famous *Vikings of the Sunrise* (listed in the “Mythological Sources and Commentaries” section previously in this chapter), Buck left a valuable study (548 pages) of the history of the first settling of New Zealand by the Māori. His book has become the standard reference for the ancient history and culture of the Māori.

Davidson, Janet. *The Prehistory of New Zealand*. Auckland, NZ: Longman Paul, 1984.

A most readable and contemporary synthesis of the early history of New Zealand by one of New Zealand’s most noted archaeologists. Davidson has carried out excavations in numerous islands of the Pacific, and her writings reflect a cultural and historical approach to her subject matter.

Sinclair, Keith. *A History of New Zealand*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961. Reprint, Auckland, NZ: Penguin, 1991.

Anyone researching the history of New Zealand can hardly miss the many references to the author Keith Sinclair, late professor of history at Auckland University. His *History* was first published in 1961 and has gone through 5 editions and numerous reprints (the last was in 1991). His well-received, single-volume *Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand* (New York: Oxford University Press) appeared in 1990 and then again in 1996. Both volumes contain chapters on the early history of the Māori, and of course his *History* needs updating.

Tregear, Edward. *The Maori Race*. Wanganui, NZ: A. D. Willis, 1904.

The volume studies the Māori from childhood to death in its nearly 600 pages. It succeeds by providing the most comprehensive, single-volume study on the ancient Māori by one of New Zealand’s most authoritative writers, whose Māori dictionary is reviewed in the “Mythological Sources and Commentaries” section previously in this chapter.

## **PREHISTORY—SĀMOA**

Buck, Peter H. *Samoan Material Culture*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1930. Reprint, New York: Kraus Reprints, 1988.

Buck (see also the “Mythological Sources and Commentaries” section previously in this chapter) became a staff member of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu and during that time he participated in numerous expeditions to the Pacific islands. His report entitled “Samoa Material Culture” in 1928 secured him an international reputation and a lectureship at Yale University. Buck enjoyed an advantage over previous academics who carried out research in the Pacific because, being a Māori, he was accepted by local islanders who were more willing to open up to his inquiries.

Henry, Brother Fred. *Samoa: An Early History*. Revised by Tofa Pula and Nicholao I. Tuitelapaga. Pago Pago: American Samoa Department of Education, 1980. Reprint, *History of Sāmoa*, Āpia: Commercial Printers, 1992.

This nearly 200-page work is a collection of legends recorded in English by Brother Fred Henry (1879–1945) in 1930. The work includes maps and illustrations and covers Samoan ethnology, history, and legends. The Department of Education in American Sāmoa had them translated into Samoan and published in 1980.

Holmes, Lowell D. *Samoa Village: Then and Now*. 2d ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

Distinguished professor emeritus at the University of Kansas, Wichita, Holmes first visited Sāmoa in 1953 through 1954, and during subsequent visits, he has documented the changes that have taken place since Margaret Mead’s visit there in 1925. He has been the only other anthropologist who has done extensive work on the island of Ta’u. In his book, Holmes emphasizes the effects of technology and how the island has opened up because of improvements in transportation.

Krämer, Augustin F. *Die Samoa-Inseln*. 2 vols. Stuttgart: E. Schweitzerbart, 1902–1903. Translated by Theodore Verhaaren as *The Samoan Islands*. 2 vols. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994–1995).

(See review in the “Mythological Sources and Commentaries” section previously in this chapter.)

Turner, George. *Samoa: A Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*. New York: AMS Press, 1979. Reprint, Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1989.

(See review in the “Mythological Sources and Commentaries” section previously in this chapter.)



## PREHISTORY—TOKELAU

Hopper, Antony, and Judith Huntsman, transl. *Matagi Tokelau: History and Traditions of Tokelau*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1991.

The book of 223 pages was originally written in Tokelauan by people or by groups of people for whom one person acted as a scribe. It is one of the very few documents on ancient Tokelauan traditions. The history traces Tokelau's origins, inter-atoll conflicts, and the arrival of the explorers and Christian missionaries, bringing events up to about 1987.

Huntsman, Judith, and Antony Hooper. *Tokelau: A Historical Ethnography*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996.

An anthropologist at the University of Auckland, Huntsman is regarded as the foremost contemporary authority on the islands of Tokelau. This volume (355 pages) is an ethnographic study completed in 1970 of 3 Tokelau atolls. It discusses Tokelau's ancient past, the arrival of European explorers, and their subsequent colonial history through the use of foreign documents and local narratives and records. It is profusely illustrated with over 100 images.

## PREHISTORY—TONGA

Campbell, Ian C. *Classical Tongan Kingship*. Nuku'alofa, Tonga: 'Atenisi University, 1989; *Island Kingdom: Tonga, Ancient and Modern*. Christchurch, NZ: Canterbury University Press, 1992.

Professor of history at the University of Canterbury (Christchurch, New Zealand), Campbell presents one of the finest histories of the Kingdom of Tonga—the story of Tonga since its foundation about 1500 B.C. It is an essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the island kingdom and its people.

Ferdon, Edwin N. *Early Tonga as the Explorers Saw It, 1616–1810*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987.

Ferdon (1913–2002) worked as an anthropologist at the University of Arizona and associate director of the Arizona State Museum. In this work on Tonga, he offers a detailed summary of the ethnography of the island at the time of European contact. During his lifetime, Ferdon published

widely on subjects ranging from Ecuadorian geography to Polynesian cultural and crop origins to Hohokam ball courts and the ruins of Tonala, Chiapas.

Kirch, Patrick. *Niutoputapu: The Prehistory of a Polynesian Chieftdom*. Seattle: Burke Museum, 1988.

Hawaiian-born Kirch became an anthropologist and served with the Bishop Museum in Honolulu between 1975 and 1984. He conducted numerous research expeditions to the South Pacific and has published numerous monographs and books, his most recent being *Hawaiki, Ancestral Polynesia: An Essay in Historical Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Mariner, Will. *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands in the South Pacific Ocean . . . arranged by John Martin*. 2 vols. London: Will Mariner, 1817.

As a fifteen-year-old, Will Mariner (1791–1853) was shipwrecked on the islands of Tonga and from 1806 to 1810 was held in friendly captivity. He learned the Tongan language fluently and was taken under protection of the “king.” Mariner’s book provides a wealth of anthropological and historical information on the islands of Tonga. The book was actually written by London physician John Martin. The volumes have gone through numerous printings.

Vason, George. *An Authentic Narrative of Four Years’ Residence at Tongataboo . . . in 1796*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, 1810.

As one of the first missionaries to Tonga in 1797, Vason (1772–1838) married a local Tongan woman and adopted many of the Tongan ways—acts that were frowned upon by the other Christian missionaries. After Vason returned to England, he wrote of his adventures, which provide some of the earliest narrative histories of the islands.

## PREHISTORY—TUVALU

Besnier, Niko. *Tuvaluan: A Polynesian Language of the Central Pacific*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

After many years of study, research, and publication on the Tuvaluan language, Besnier has presented a substantial (662 pages) first dictionary/grammar on this Polynesian dialect.

Koch, Gerd. *The Material Culture of Tuvalu*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1984. Reprint, Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1991.

An English translation of *Materielle Kultur der Ellice-Inseln* (1961), this work (215 pages) is an ethnological study of the peoples of Tuvalu, including their food supply and preparation, hygiene, clothing, ornaments, cords, houses, furniture, rafts, canoes, games, and weapons in their historical and cultural context.

Laracy, Hugh, ed. *Tuvalu: A History*. Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1983.

Considered the best history of Tuvalu (208 pages), its chapters were written by several individuals, including Simati Faaniu, from the Institute of Pacific Studies in Suva, Fiji.

## **POLYNESIAN CULTURE: ARTS, LITERATURE, MUSIC, DANCE**

Barrow, Terence. *Art and Life in Polynesia*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1973.

Noted Māori and Polynesian art expert, Barrow (1923–2001) wrote over 20 books on the subject of Polynesian art. He worked for many years in New Zealand before joining the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum staff in Honolulu, where he lived until his death. This volume, *Art and Life in Polynesia*, is considered the work that brought him his worldwide fame, although his volumes on Māori art are considered his finest.

Gathercole, Peter W., Adrienne L. Kaeppler, and Douglas Newton. *The Art of the Pacific Islands*. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1979.

Written by 3 of the foremost authorities on Pacific islands art, this folio volume of 365 pages is actually a catalog of the exposition of Pacific art that was held at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., from 1 July to 14 October 1979. Hundreds of artifacts from around the world were on exhibit, and the book not only provides photos and descriptions of each item, but it also offers valuable chapters written by each of the separate authors on “Continuities and Changes in Western Pacific Art” (Newton), “Polynesian Cul-

tural History" and "New Zealand Māori" (Gathercole), and "Aspects of Polynesian Aesthetic Traditions" (Kaeppler). Most of the photographs, unfortunately, were reproduced in black and white rather than color.

Kaeppler, Adrienne L. *"Artificial Curiosities" Being an Exposition of Native Manufactures Collected on the Three Pacific Voyages of Captain James Cook*, R. N. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1978.

Kaeppler has worked at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., as curator of Oceanic artifacts for many years. She is a prolific researcher and writer, having written numerous works on Pacific islands' cultural arts. In 1978, an exhibition of Captain Cook's artifacts was held at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu. Kaeppler compiled this folio-size catalog, cited above, of nearly 300 pages, described the thousands of artifacts on display, and placed them in the context of the various islands' history and culture. Superbly written and exquisitely illustrated, her most recent work, *Oceanic Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997) of 633 pages will remain the standard reference on Polynesian arts for years to come. Refer also to her *Cook Voyage Artifacts in Leningrad, Berne, and Florence Museums*. (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1978).

Kooijman, Simon. *Tapa in Polynesia*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1972.

Kooijman's massive work of nearly 500 pages is considered the definitive study of tapa production throughout Polynesia. Illustrated and thoroughly detailed in its history and descriptions.

McLean, Mervyn. *An Annotated Bibliography of Oceanic Music and Dance*. Wellington, NZ: Polynesian Society, 1977. Second ed., Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1995.

One of the most elaborate and inclusive works (543 pages) dealing with 2 of the most important cultural contributions of Polynesia to world art forms—music and dance. This volume is well indexed and includes a valuable bibliography. McLean also published an important *Annotated Bibliography of Oceanic Music and Dance* (Wellington, NZ: Polynesian Society, 1977) and a 418-page volume on *Maori Music* (Auckland, NZ: Auckland University Press, 1996).

Meyer, Anthony J. P. *Oceanic Art = Ozeanische Kunst = Art océanien*. 2 vols. Köln: Konemann, 1995.

An American-born art dealer and Paris-based gallery owner, Meyer published 2 volumes that serve as an introduction as well as a major reference work on the fine arts of Oceania (including Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia) in 640 pages (including 689 colored photographs), primarily of monumental wood sculpture. To appeal to a wide segment of the world's readers, the text is printed in parallel columns in English, German, and French.

Oliver, Douglas L. *Oceania: The Native Cultures of Australia and the Pacific Islands*. 2 vols. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1988.

A 2-volume, authoritative summary of the native cultures of the Pacific islands including Australia, Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia. Part 1 describes the geography of the Pacific and the biological, linguistic, and archaeological evidence concerning the origins of the Pacific peoples and their migrations from island to island. Part 2 describes their tools and techniques and how they met their basic survival needs, and Part 3 details the various social structures of island societies. Oliver summarized this massive 2-volume study into a smaller volume (172 pages) entitled *Native Cultures of the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), available also in paperback.

Thomas, Nicholas. *Oceanic Art*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1995.

Thomas presents a concise and colorful overview of the beautiful art of the Pacific islands in 216 pages, including numerous color and black-and-white photographs and drawings. He describes the various art forms from the various peoples of the Pacific and provides meaning to both the islanders and Westerners.

Tryon, Darrell T., ed. *Comparative Austronesian Dictionary: An Introduction to Austronesian Studies*. 5 vols. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995.

Currently a managing editor of the journal *Pacific Linguistics* and professor of linguistics at Australian National University (Sydney), Tryon is considered one of the major authorities on Pacific languages. This monumental 5-volume set is one of the most important recent publications in Pacific linguistics. It contains an introduction to the Austronesian languages, an overview of the current state of Austronesian linguistics, and an annotated comparative thesaurus of some 1,200 items in 80 Austronesian languages. A valuable reference book.

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## INTERNET WEB SITES

Internet Web site addresses appear and disappear so frequently that one is reluctant to include them in a publication such as this, but because of the popularity of the World Wide Web and the general information it provides millions of readers, the following two sections are being included. The first, a “General Introduction to Polynesia,” lists sites that offer overall introductions to the islands of Polynesia, and the second, “Websites for Polynesian Mythology,” provides a listing of the Web sites that include any substantial Polynesian mythological data. It must be remembered, however, that these latter Web sites had to obtain their information originally from the older, printed sources listed in chapter 4 and the references and recommended readings cited at the end of other chapters and entries in this volume, and therefore, I refer you to these sources, which are the best-written sources on the subject.

Internet researchers are also encouraged to learn to use the excellent search engines to their fullest potential. Several are recommended—Google, AltaVista, AllTheWeb.com, and so on. These powerful search engines index an extremely large percentage of available Web pages, and they have many special features to help find exactly what you’re looking for. For example, Web sites for individual island mythologies may be found by typing in an island name and the word mythology in the particular search window; for example, typing in “samoan mythology” (using the quotation marks) will find Web sites that have the phrase “samoan mythology” somewhere on that page. The two most prominent island finds, of course, will be for Hawai’i (“hawaiian mythology”) and New Zealand (“maori mythology”), and these two searches will produce a wealth of information. The smaller island groups, however, are less represented, and researchers who wish to read these mythologies will again have to resort to the printed sources listed elsewhere in this volume.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO POLYNESIA

### ***CIA World Factbook***

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

For many years, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the U.S. government has sponsored a Web site that offers short, detailed information on all of the nations of the world, including among them the island nations of Polynesia. The Factbook attempts to present data as accurately and concisely as possible on the nations' government, geography, people, economy, military, and transportation.

### ***Michael R. Ogden's Pacific Islands Internet Resources***

<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~ogden/piir/index.html>

Frustrated by the scattered and incomplete nature of the World Wide Web and other Internet links to resources on or about the Pacific Islands, Michael Ogden at the University of Hawai'i decided to create his own page of links back in 1995.

### ***Pacific Islands News and Information—Pacific Islands Report***

[http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/news\\_links\\_text.htm#Country](http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/news_links_text.htm#Country)

This is one of the oldest and best all-around Web sites for an introduction to the islands of the Pacific. Although its primary purpose is to provide current news-related data, its links connect to some of the best Polynesian Web sites on the Internet. Its sponsors are the Pacific Islands Development Program/East-West Center and the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawai'i. Its founding editor was Al Hulsén, and its current news editor is Peter Wagner.

## **American Sāmoa**

Note: See also "Sāmoa" later in this chapter

### ***American Sāmoa Government Web Site***

<http://www.asg-gov.com/>

This is the official Web site for the government of American Sāmoa. It has direct links to the news, government departments and services, press releases, general island information, history, and other data. Its chronological and historical calendar since 1606 is an important feature.



## **Cook Islands**

### ***Cook Islands Government Web Site***

<http://www.cook-islands.gov.ck/>

This official government site contains a wide range of information about Cook Islands government and its news, and a brief history of the islands, as well as links to the various government ministries and departments. The site is maintained by Govmedia, the Cook Islands government communications unit attached to the prime minister's office.

### ***The Cook Islands: The Definitive***

<http://www.ck/index.html>

This is another more-detailed Cook Islands Web site that offers more specific information on the islands' government, history, art, religion, travel, events, and sea sports. It is geared to the tourist and the interested researcher.

### ***Cook Islands Tourism Association***

<http://www.cook-islands.com/>

This is the official Cook Islands Tourism Association Web site. It provides excellent data as well as up-to-date information in its online Drumbeat Newsletter, which is published periodically.

## **Easter Island**

### ***Centre for South Pacific Studies***

<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~ogden/piir/pacific/Rapanui.html#AUTHOR>

This Web site reproduces a well-written article by Professor Grant McCall, originally published in the seventeenth edition of Pacific Islands Year Book (Suva: Fiji Times, 1995). McCall is currently one of the foremost authorities on Easter Island and is associated with the Centre for South Pacific Studies, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.

### ***Easter Island Foundation***

<http://www.islandheritage.org/>

This Web site is maintained by the Easter Island Foundation. Established in 1989, the foundation is located in California, and its main purpose is to promote conservation and to protect the cultural heritage of Easter Island and other Polynesian islands. Among its many projects, it created, and continues to support, a

William Mulloy Library on the island. This Web site provides a general guide to Easter Island history and offers a photo gallery and information regarding the purpose and goals of the foundation.

***Easter Island Home Page***

<http://www.netaxs.com/~trance/linklist.html>

A good place to start for research on Easter Island. Its home page provides numerous links to the various interests on Easter Island.

## **French Polynesia**

***French Polynesia Government Web Site***

<http://www.presidence.pf/index.php?-1>

The official government Web site in English for French Polynesia. It offers detailed information regarding French Polynesia's governmental organization and functions, as well as providing links to its history, culture, people, and economy. It is also an excellent tourism page.

***Tahiti Press***

<http://www.tahitipresse.com/index>

An online news journal (available in English), sponsored by Tahiti Press, that provides up-to-date information on the happenings in French Polynesia as well as a gallery of beautiful photos from the islands.

***TravelNet***

<http://www.tahiti-explorer.com/index.html>

A tourist Web site, sponsored by TravelNet in Los Angeles, that offers detailed information regarding all of the islands of French Polynesia, beautiful photos, and numerous links to other sources.

## **Hawai'i**

***Hawai'i Government***

<http://www.hawaii.gov/>

Hawai'i's official state Web site that provides links to all the needful information regarding living and visiting the fiftieth U.S. state.

***Hawaiian Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism***

<http://www.hawaii.gov/dbedt/db01/index.html>

A comprehensive data book (2001) for the state of Hawai'i, compiled by the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism, and entitled the "State of Hawaii Data Book, the Official Summary of Statistics on the Social, Economic, and Political Organization of Our State." The data book provides valuable statistics for every level of Hawaiian government, society, and economy. Sections of the different topics, provided in PDF format, are available for downloading to your own computer.

***Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau***

<http://www.gohawaii.com/>

The official Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau Web site that provides everything you need to know about traveling to Hawai'i.

***Polynesian Voyaging Society***

<http://leahi.kcc.hawaii.edu/org/pvs/>

Web site of the Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS), founded in 1973 to research how Polynesian seafarers discovered and settled nearly every inhabitable island in the Pacific Ocean before European explorers arrived in the sixteenth century.

## **New Zealand**

***New Zealand Government Web Site***

<http://www.govt.nz/en/home/>

The official Web site for the different levels of government for New Zealand, including links for Māori services and to information regarding the country, its history, and so forth.

***Statistics New Zealand (Te Tari Tatau)***

[http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/web/prod\\_serv.nsf/htmldocs/Profile+of+New+Zealand](http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/web/prod_serv.nsf/htmldocs/Profile+of+New+Zealand)

Profile of New Zealand 2000 is an introduction to New Zealand. Much of the material presented is abridged from the New Zealand Official Yearbook 2000. It provides quick facts for almost every facet of government and society.

## **Sāmoa**

### ***Sāmoa Government Web Site***

<http://www.govt.ws/>

The official Web site for the government of Sāmoa. Besides the official government data, it provides general information on the islands' history, geography, and so on.

### ***Samoalive.com***

<http://www.samoalive.com/>

This Web site provides comprehensive links to Samoan businesses, education, entertainment, fashion, government, news, personal, society and culture, sports, and travel. It also includes a mythology section where individuals can post stories.

## **Tonga**

### ***Tonga Government Web Site***

<http://www.pmo.gov.to/>

This official Web site for the government of Tonga provides links to its official departments, services, ministries, trades, press releases, and picture gallery.

### ***Tongan Visitors' Bureau***

<http://www.vacations.tvb.gov.to/index.htm>

Tongan Visitors' Bureau Web site that provides some additional information about the islands.

## **Tuvalu**

### ***Tuvalu***

<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~ogden/piir/pacific/tuvalu.html>

Sponsored by Michael R. Ogden, a communications professor at the University of Hawai'i, this is a general overview of the country of Tuvalu. The population of 10,200 lives on 8 of Tuvalu's 9 atolls, with a total land area of less than 10 square miles. Tuvalu is a "special member" of the Commonwealth, eligible for benefits from its functional affiliates but not required to attend the heads of government meetings.

***Tuvalu Online***

<http://www.tuvaluislands.com/>

"Tuvalu Online" is the best all around Web site for the small nation of Tuvalu (formerly part of the Ellice and Gilbert Islands). It provides news headlines since 1997 and details on its history, flag, anthem, photo albums, stamp collections, and other links.

## WEB SITES FOR POLYNESIAN MYTHOLOGY

***Encyclopedia Mythica***

<http://www.pantheon.org/>

This Web site, established in 1995 and maintained by M. F. Lindemans, proclaims to be an encyclopedia of world mythology that contains over 6,000 definitions of gods and goddesses, supernatural beings, legendary creatures, and monsters from around the world. The Mythica contains approximately 275 articles on Polynesia, most of which were extracted from Jan Knappert's book *Pacific Mythology* (London: Harper Collins, 1992).

***The Internet Sacred Text Archive***

<http://www.sacred-texts.com>

"Sacred Texts" was established in March of 1999 to provide electronic texts about religion, mythology, legends and folklore, and occult and esoteric topics. The site offers copies of sacred texts in English or in their original languages that were gleaned from around the world. Its electronic texts come from scanned books and articles in the public domain or from other sources such as the Internet. Its Polynesian collection includes: an excellent introduction to Polynesian mythology by Roland B. Dixon from his 1916 *Oceanic Mythology* volume; William J. Thomson's monograph on the Easter Island language, the *Te Pito Te Huna: or Easter Island*; George Grey's famous *Māori Polynesian Mythology* (1854); Edward Shortland's 1882 monograph *Māori Religion and Mythology*; S. Percy Smith's *The Lore of the Whare-Wananga* (1913); Martha Beckwith's translation of the Hawaiian creation chant *The Kumulipo*; the four Hawaiian volumes by William D. Westervelt—*Legends of Māui* (1910), *Hawaiian Legends of Old Honolulu* (1915), *Hawaiian Legends of Volcanoes* (1916), and *Hawaiian Legends of Ghosts and Ghost-Gods* (1916); and *The Samoan Story of Creation* by John Fraser, published in the 1891 *Journal of the Polynesian Society*.

***Jane Resture's Oceanic Mythology***

[http://www.janeresture.com/oceania\\_myths/index.htm](http://www.janeresture.com/oceania_myths/index.htm)

Jane Resture's Oceanic Web site includes myths from "each of the islands and atolls that make up Oceania." Her Polynesian section includes a general introduction to Polynesian mythology and then brief overviews of the mythologies of Easter Island, Hawai'i, New Zealand, Tahiti, and Tuvalu. The articles are illustrated with appropriate pictures of artifacts from Polynesia. Her other Web site, found at <http://www.janesoceania.com/index.html>, is an excellent source for general information on the islands of Oceania, including Polynesia. Jane is an islander (from Kiribati) who moved to Australia, spent many years in government service, but now Dr. "Dame" Jane Resture spends her time in research and writing about the Pacific.

***The Wikipedia Encyclopedia***

<http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polynesian-mythology>

This Web site is a multilingual project, started in January of 2001 to provide a free encyclopedia on the Internet. The site contains 270 short entries describing Polynesian deities all of which provide cross-referencing to other entries.

***Windows to the Universe***

[http://www.windows.ucar.edu/tour/link=/mythology/polynesia\\_culture.html](http://www.windows.ucar.edu/tour/link=/mythology/polynesia_culture.html)

This site proposes to develop a fun and different Web site about the earth and space sciences. Begun in 1995, its goal is to build an Internet site that includes a rich array of documents, images, movies, animations, and data sets. It is intended for public school students and teachers, museums, libraries, and home-study groups and is written for three levels: elementary, middle-school, and high-school students.

Despite its "scientific" leaning, the site includes several Māori legends on Papa, Tangaroa, Tāwhiri, Rona, Rangi, and Papa, and one Hawaiian legend of Pele.

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## GLOSSARY

**Ahu** A raised platform, usually associated with a religious structure. In Easter Island, for example, the large *moai* statues were placed on an *ahu*. In Eastern Polynesia, an *ahu* was a shrine or altar frequently found in outdoor temples. See also **Heiau** and **Marae/Malae/Mala'e**.

**'Aito** (Tahitian) The Australian pine or the ironwood tree (*Casuarina equisetifolia*), a deciduous tree with a soft, wispy, pine-like appearance that can grow to one hundred feet or more in height. It produces a cone-like fruit that resembles a pine tree, and its scale-like leaves look like pine needles. It grows throughout Polynesia, and its hard, strong trunk provides wood for building materials, carvings, and weapons. The word also means brave, strong, and hence "a strong warrior or hero." See also **Koa/Toa**.

**Akua/Atua** An Eastern Polynesian word meaning "god, goddess, spirit, supernatural being, image, or ghost." Polynesians offered sacrifices (food) in praise to them; and an *atua* might take possession of a priest and speak through him, or it might enter into a bird or the wind to reveal his will. The Samoan word is *aitu*.

**Aliki/Ali'i/Ari'i/Ariki** (Marquesan; Hawaiian; Tahitian; Māori) A chief, chieftainess, or leader of a tribe, referring both to female and male genders. Most *aliki* claimed genealogical descent from some primordial god and/or a famous ancestor. Polynesians believed their rulers also possessed a spiritual power called *mana*, part of which they had inherited through their ancestors and part of which they had gained through mortal experiences. See also the "Chiefly Class" entry in chapter 3 and **Mana** later in this glossary.

**Alofi** (Samoan) An assembly of chiefs gathered for instructions or to participate in a kava ceremony. See also **Fono** and **Kava**.

**Aloha/Aroha/Arofa** (Hawaiian; Tahitian) A Polynesian word with many meanings—love, a loved one, compassion, mercy, as well as greetings for hello and good-bye. See also **Kia ora**.

**Ao** A Polynesian word meaning light, day, daylight, to become dawn, cloud, world, and earth.



**Aotearoa** (Māori) White, clear, cloud, or day. Anciently, it referred specifically to the North Island of New Zealand as the “long, white cloud.” In the twentieth century, however, the word came to refer to the entire island state of New Zealand.

‘**Ava** Samoan word for kava. See **Kava**.

‘**Awa** Hawaiian word for kava. See **Kava**.

**Eastern Polynesia** A cultural division within Polynesia consisting of the major island groups of Hawai‘i, the Cook Islands, New Zealand, French Polynesia (Tahiti, Marquesas, etc.), and Easter Island. See also **Western Polynesia**.

**Fafine/Fefine** (Samoan; Tongan) A word meaning woman, wife. See also **Vahine/Wahine**.

**Fale/Fare** (Samoan; Tahitian) House or building; *hale* in Hawaiian and *whare* in New Zealand Māori. See also **Hale** and **Whare**.

**Fau** (Samoan, Tahitian, and Tongan) The hibiscus plant (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*), whose fibers are used as strainers in kava preparation; *hau* in Hawaiian. See also **Hau/Fau** and **Kava**.

**Fono** (Tongan and Samoan) A meeting or an assembly of chiefs gathered for instructions or to participate in the kava ceremony. See also **Alofi**.

**Haere mai/Hele mai** (Māori and Tahitian; Hawaiian) An expression meaning come here, come to my house, welcome, and so forth.

**Haka** (Māori) A dance or to dance. The *haka* is referred to as a “posture dance,” and one form of it is popularly known as a war dance. The group is headed by a leader (either male or female) and the dancers go through numerous defiant gestures—protruding eyes and tongues and contorted bodies—accompanied with the wielding of various weapons of war. See also **Hula**.

**Hale** (Hawaiian) House or building. See also **Fale/Fare** and **Whare**.

**Haole** (Hawaiian) Foreign or foreigner, usually in reference to white (Caucasian) people. See also **Pākehā**, **Palagi**, and **Popa‘ā**.

**Hau/Fau** (Hawaiian; Tongan) The hibiscus plant (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) whose fibers are used in Sāmoa and Tonga as strainers in kava preparation. Its colorful flowers were used as personal decorations or for houses and temples. Its inner bark was sometimes used to make **kapa** (bark cloth). See also **Fau**, **Kava**, and **Tapa**.

**Heiau** (Hawaiian) An open-air temple in which pre-Christian Hawaiians worshiped and offered sacrifices to their deities. *Heiau* ranged in size from a small enclosure for a single family to a huge stone enclosure hundreds of feet in length designated for tribal or interisland worship. See also the “Temples” entry in chapter 3 and **Marae/Malae/Mala‘e** later in this glossary.

**Hula** (Hawaiian) A dance or to dance. Hawaiian mythology indicates that it was the goddess Hi'iaka, sister to the volcano goddess Pele, who first introduced the hula. Their sister Laka, however, eventually became recognized as the guardian and goddess of the dance. See also **Haka**.

**Imu/Umu** (Hawaiian; Tahitian) Underground oven used for cooking food, usually circular or rectangular, a few feet wide and several feet deep. Firewood and stones (preferably lava) are first placed in the pit, and the wood set ablaze. The stones become heated and are then covered with banana leaves. Various foods are then placed at different places within the *imu*, and then they are covered with banana and/or tī leaves and topped with dirt. The enclosure works like a large steam oven, keeping the food moist while it is being cooked. See also **Tī**.

**Kāhili** (Hawaiian) A long stick or a standard (up to twenty feet in height) with a type of colorful "feather duster" tied at the top and used as a symbol of royalty. *Kāhili* were carried in various processions of the chiefs, or they were set up in royal residences for different ceremonies. They were dismantled when not in use and the feather tops stored in large calabashes until they were needed again.

**Kahuna** (Hawaiian) An ancient priest or sorcerer, or more correctly "an expert." *Kahunas* usually came from the chiefly class, and they were highly trained either in schools or as apprentices. The great *kahunas* (*kahuna nui*) were often advisors to the high chiefs (*ali'i nui*) while the *kahuna pule* were the prayer experts who generally attended to the various religious duties. There were numerous other *kahunas* who were expert at specific duties for which they were trained. See also the "Priests" entry in chapter 3 and **Tohunga** later in this glossary.

**Kalo** (Hawaiian) See **Taro/Kalo/Talo**.

**Kāne** (Hawaiian) Male, man, male lover, husband, also the name of one of the principal Hawaiian gods. See **Tāne**.

**Kapa** (Hawaiian) Polynesian bark cloth. See also **Tapa**.

**Kapu** (Hawaiian) Taboo, prohibition, inaccessible. See also **Sā** and **Tapu**.

**Kava** Kava (*Piper methysticum*) is commonly used throughout Polynesia. It is a type of narcotic or intoxicant drink, and anciently it was drunk with meals. In Tonga, however, its use was ceremonialized, and it became the central focus of most official gatherings. The drink is prepared by mashing and squeezing the kava root over and over again in water. When it is finished, it resembles muddy water. Drinking too much kava results in a type of stupor rather than drunkenness.

**Kī** (Māori) The common tī plant. See also **Tī**.

**Kia ora** (Māori) Informal, everyday greeting, literally meaning “good health.”

See also **Aloha/Aroha/Arofa**.

**Kiʻi** (Hawaiian) Image, pictures, or statue carved from wood. See also **Tiki/Tiʻi**.

**Koa/Toa** (Hawaiian; Tahitian) Brave, fearless, strong, soldier. Also the name of a large tree, the *Acacia koa*, strong enough for carving surfboards, canoes, calabashes, and furniture. See also **ʻAito**.

**Kūmara/Kumala/ʻUmara** (Māori; Tongan; Tahitian) Sweet potato (*Batatas edulis*), one of the principal foods throughout all of Polynesia, and especially popular in Hawaiʻi, where it is known as *ʻuala*. Its South American origin has caused much speculation among scholars regarding its spread throughout Polynesia, whether it was brought to the islands by ancient Americans or whether Polynesians visited the Americas and returned home with starts of the tuberous vegetable. Growing these starchy tubers is labor intensive, and for this reason, they were not as popular in some islands. The ripened tubers are dug out of the ground and cooked, after which their insides become sweet and soft.

**Lā/Laʻa** (Samoan; Tongan) Sun, day, daylight, sacred, holiness. Generally recognized and worshipped throughout Polynesia as the sun god. See also **Rā/Raʻa/Ra**.

**Lauhala** (Hawaiian) The pandanus (*Pandaniflorae*) plant, often called the screw-pine, whose long, tough leaves were used in the plaiting of mats, baskets, pillows, fans, and even sails for outrigger canoes.

**Lehua** (Hawaiian) More specifically, the *ʻōhiʻa lehua* (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) tree/bush, which grows on the uplands of the Big Island of Hawaiʻi and is dedicated to the goddesses Pele and Hiʻiaka. See Illustration 3.28 in chapter 3.

**Lei** (Hawaiian) A decorative wreath or garland of shells, leaves, beads, or flowers usually worn around the neck.

**Lūʻau** (Hawaiian) In contemporary times, means a “feast.” It actually refers to the leaf of the young *kalo* (taro) plant in which food is wrapped while it is being cooked in the underground oven (*imu*). See also **Imu/Umu** and **Taro/Kalo/Talo**.

**Mahana** (Tahitian and Māori) Sun, day, warm. See also **Lā/Laʻa** and **Rā/Raʻa**.

**Mahi/Maʻi/Māi** (Tongan; Marquesan; Tahitian) Fermented breadfruit. Some Polynesians enjoyed fermented breadfruit. In preparing it, the rind was cut off the ripened breadfruit, and the pulp placed into a leaf-lined pit and covered, where it was left to ferment for several months. The paste was then taken out and baked or mixed with other ingredients. Some island groups prepared for droughts or famines by fermenting breadfruit in this manner.

**Maile** (Hawaiian) A vine (*Alyxia olivaeformis*) whose fragrant green leaves are made into leis. Its shiny leaves have a musty, vanilla-like odor when bruised. It grows as a climber or twining shrub in both wet and dry forest regions of the islands. Today, *maile* leis are expensive and are generally given to honor an individual's special achievements. See also **Lei**.

**Malae/Mala'e** (Samoan; Tongan) A grassy clearing in a village for gatherings and dances. See also **Marae/Malae/Mala'e**.

**Malama/Marama/Masina** (Hawaiian; Tahitian and Māori; Samoan) Light, month, moon. In New Zealand, Marama is the moon goddess, sister to Rā, the sun god. See also the "Moon, Origin of" entry in chapter 3 and **Rā** later in this glossary.

**Malo/Maro** (Hawaiian; Tahitian and Māori) A traditional, male loincloth garment, usually made from a long strip of *kapa* (tapa) cloth (one foot wide and six to eight feet long) and wrapped between the legs and tied around the waist. The free ends were left to hang in the front and back.

**Mana** A Polynesian word meaning "power, authority, prestige, mightiness." See the "Mana" entry in chapter 3.

**Marae/Malae/Mala'e** (Tahitian and Māori; Samoan; Tongan) In Tahiti, it is an open-air temple, a place to worship, of various sizes; in New Zealand, Sāmoa, and Tonga, it is a grassy assembly area—the "village green." See the "Marae" entry in chapter 3.

**Matai** (Samoan) The head of a family or clan, a chief. Ancient Samoan government was feudal in nature with a hierarchy of chiefly titles (*matai*). The *matai* presided over his extended family (*aiga*) and provided for its needs. The title was not hereditary and could be split and administered by more than one individual (male or female). See also **Ali'iki/Ali'i/Ari'i/Ariki**.

**Matāpule** (Tongan) A traditional chief attendant, assistant, spokesman, the intellectual elite of Tonga, the wards of Tongan culture, a position handed down from father to son. Essentially, it was the *matāpule* who ran the affairs of state.

**Mele** (Hawaiian) A song or chant, to sing or to chant. See also **Oli**.

**Menehune** (Hawaiian) Name of the mythical dwarfs who originally inhabited the Hawaiian Islands. See the "Menehune" entry in chapter 3.

**Moko/Mo'o** (Māori; Hawaiian and Tahitian) Geckos or lizards, many described as mythological monsters similar to the dragons depicted in medieval European legends. *Moko* are quite common throughout the Pacific, some growing to two feet in length. See the "Monsters" entry in chapter 3.

**Moku/Motu** (Hawaiian; Central Polynesia) Island.

**Ngatu** Tongan word for *tapa*. See **Tapa**.

- Oli** (Hawaiian) A song or chant not accompanied by a dance. See also *Mele*.
- Pā** (Māori) To fortify or to defend. Anciently, it meant a fortified village versus a *kainga*, an unfortified one. Similar to other world cultures, the Māori placed their villages on defensible terrain—riverbanks, islands, hills, or edges of precipices. When built on hills, the *pā* was fortified with stockades and ramparts to protect the village from attack.
- Pākehā** (Māori) Foreign or foreigner, usually in reference to white (Caucasian) people. See also *Haole*, *Palagi*, and *Popaʻā*.
- Palagi** (Sāmoan) Foreign or foreigner, usually in reference to white (Caucasian) people. See also *Haole*, *Pākehā*, and *Popaʻā*.
- Papa** (Hawaiian and Māori) Foundation, stratum. In Māori mythology, it refers to Earth Mother. See the “Rangi and Papa” entry in chapter 3.
- Pāʻū** (Hawaiian) Women’s clothing consisting of a long piece of *kapa* (tapa) cloth wrapped around the body from the waist to the knee.
- Pō** (Māori, Tahitian, and Tongan) Night, chaos, darkness, and in mythology, the underworld. See also *Pulotu*.
- Poi** (Hawaiian) A starchy food made from the tubers of the cooked *kalo* (taro) plant, mashed and mixed with water; a paste-type substance; in New Zealand, it is a ball attached to a string used in dancing. See also *Taro/Kalo/Talo*.
- Popaʻā** (Tahitian) Foreign or foreigner, usually in reference to white (Caucasian) people. See also *Haole*, *Pākehā*, and *Palagi*.
- Puhi** (Māori) A village maiden. See also *Taupo*.
- Pulotu** (Samoan and Tongan) Underworld or paradise, presided over by the goddess Hikuleo (Tonga) or Saveasiʻuleo (Sāmoa). See the “Underworld” entry in chapter 3 and *Pō* earlier in this glossary.
- Rā/Raʻa/Ra** (Māori; Rarotongan and Tahitian) Sun, day, daylight, sacred, holiness. Generally recognized and worshiped throughout Polynesia as the sun god. See also *Lā/Laʻa*.
- Rangi** (Māori) Sky, and in mythology, Sky Father, who mated with Papa (Earth Mother) to create a progeny of children. See the “Rangi and Papa” entry in chapter 3.
- Reinga** (Māori) To leap, the place where departed spirits “jump off” this world into the underworld, located at the northern tip of New Zealand. See the “Death” entry in chapter 3.
- Sā** (Sāmoa) Forbidden or sacred. See *Tapu*.
- Sī** (Sāmoa and Tongan) The common tī plant (*Cordyline terminalis*) of Polynesia. Refer to Illustration 3.47 in chapter 3. See *Tī*.

**Siapo** (Sāmoa) Terminology for the traditional Polynesian handmade bark cloth. See **Tapa**.

**Tāne** (Māori and Tahitian) Man, husband. See **Kāne**.

**Tapa** (Tongan and Tahitian) Terminology for the traditional Polynesian handmade bark cloth made from the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*). The bark is beaten until thin. Then it is stretched and “glued” crosswise to another piece for stability. It is referred to as *kapa* in Hawai‘i, *ngatu* in Tonga, and *siapo* in Sāmoa.

**Tapu** (Tahitian, Māori, and Tongan) Taboo, prohibition, inaccessible, no trespassing, sacred. Anciently, the word indicated that the person or place could not be freely approached and was forbidden. High-ranking persons and priests were *tapu*, all sacred ground and paraphernalia could only be touched by priests, women could not eat with men, and so forth. See the “Tapu” entry in chapter 3 and **Kapu** and **Sa** in this glossary.

**Taro/Kalo/Talo** (Māori and Tahitian; Hawaiian; Tongan) A starchy, tuberous plant (*Colocasia antiquarum* v. *esculentum*) grown and used as a principal food by most Polynesians. Its tubers grow ten to twelve inches long. They are then dug up, baked or boiled, and eaten. It then has a slight purplish color. Hawaiians mash their cooked *kalo* (taro) with water into a delicacy called poi; its consistency depends, of course, upon the amount of water added. Hawaiians refer to its varied consistency as one-finger, two-finger, or three-finger poi. See also **Poi**.

**Taupo** (Sāmoa) A village maiden, one who represents the whole community on festive occasions. In New Zealand she was called a *puhi*.

**Tī** (Tahitian and Māori) A common plant (*Cordyline terminalis*) grown throughout Polynesia in more than twenty varieties. Its leaves were used for clothing, thatching for housing, and cooking, and its roots were used for sweetening various foods. The Hawaiians call it *kī* and the Tongans *sī*. See the “Tī Plant” entry and Illustration 3.47 in chapter 3.

**Tiki/Tī‘i** (Māori; Tongan) Image, pictures, or statue carved from wood. Also name for the first man.

**Tohunga** (Māori) An ancient priest or sorcerer, or more correctly “an expert.” See also **Kahuna**.

**‘Ualu** (Hawaiian) Sweet potato. See **Kūmara/Kumala/‘Umara**.

**Ufi/Uhi/U‘i/Uwhi** (Tongan; Tahitian; Rarotongan; Māori) The yam (*Dioscorea alata*) was grown throughout Polynesian. In Tonga, it was the most important root crop and figured prominently in sacrificial offerings, but in New Zealand, where it was harder to grow, it was given little attention.

**‘Ulu/‘Uru** (Hawaiian and Samoan; Tahitian) Breadfruit (*Artocarpus incisa*), the staff of life among ancient Polynesians. See the “Breadfruit, Origin of” entry in chapter 3.

**‘Umu** (Tongan and Tahitian) Underground oven. See **Imu**.

**Vahine/Wahine** (Tahitian; Hawaiian and Māori) Woman, wife. *Fafine* in Samoan, *Fefine* in Tongan.

**Western Polynesia** A cultural division within Polynesia consisting of the major island groups of Tonga, Sāmoa, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Wallis, and Futuna. See also **Eastern Polynesia**.

**Whare** (Māori) House. See **Fale/Fare** and **Hale**.



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