

**LEGENDS OF MA-UI- A
DEMI GOD OF
POLYNESIA, AND
OF HIS MOTHER HINA**

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Legends of Ma-Ui- a Demi God of Polynesia, and of His Mother Hina by W. D. Westervelt

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W. D. WESTERVELT

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BY
W. D. WESTERVELT.

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HELPS TO PRONUNCIATION

There are three simple rules which practically control Hawaiian pronunciation: (1) Give each vowel the German sound. (2) Pronounce each vowel. (3) Never allow a consonant to close a syllable.

Interchangeable consonants are many. The following are the most common: h=s; l=r; k=t; n=ng; v=w.

PREFACE

Maui is a demi god whose name should probably be pronounced Ma-u-i, *i. e.*, Ma-oo-e. The meaning of the word is by no means clear. It may mean "to live," "to subsist." It may refer to beauty and strength, or it may have the idea of "the left hand" or "turning aside." The word is recognized as belonging to remote Polynesian antiquity.

MacDonald, a writer of the New Hebrides Islands, gives the derivation of the name Maui primarily from the Arabic word "Mohyi," which means "causing to live" or "life," applied sometimes to the gods and sometimes to chiefs as "preservers and sustainers" of their followers.

The Maui story probably contains a larger number of unique and ancient myths than that of any other legendary character in the mythology of any nation.

There are three centers for these legends, New Zealand in the south, Hawaii in the north, and the Tahitian group including the Hervey Islands in the east. In each of these groups of islands, separated by thousands of miles, there are the same legends, told in almost the same way, and with very little variation in names. The intermediate groups of islands of even as great importance as Tonga, Fiji or Samoa, possess the same legends in more or less of a fragmentary condition, as if the three centers had been settled first when the Polynesians were driven away from the Asiatic coasts by their enemies, the

Malays. From these centers voyagers sailing away in search of adventures would carry fragments rather than complete legends. This is exactly what has been done and there are as a result a large number of hints of wonderful deeds. The really long legends as told about the demi god Ma-u-i and his mother Hina number about twenty.

It is remarkable that these legends have kept their individuality. The Polynesians are not a very clannish people. For some centuries they have not been in the habit of frequently visiting each other. They have had no written language, and picture writing of any kind is exceedingly rare throughout Polynesia and yet in physical traits, national customs, domestic habits, and language, as well as in traditions and myths, the different inhabitants of the islands of Polynesia are as near of kin as the cousins of the United States and Great Britain.

The Maui legends form one of the strongest links in the mythological chain of evidence which binds the scattered inhabitants of the Pacific into one nation. An incomplete list aids in making clear the fact that groups of islands hundreds and even thousands of miles apart have been peopled centuries past by the same organic race. Either complete or fragmentary Maui legends are found in the single islands and island groups of Aneityum, Bowditch or Fakaofa, Efate, Fiji, Fotuna, Gilbert, Hawaii, Hervey, Huahine, Mangaia, Manihiki, Marquesas, Marshall, Nauru, New Hebrides, New Zealand, Samoa, Savage, Tahiti or Society, Tauna, Tokelau and Tonga.

S. Percy Smith of New Zealand in his book *Hawaiki* mentions a legend according to which Maui made a voyage after overcoming a sea monster, visiting the Ton-