

W. D. WESTERVELT  
HAWAIIAN LEGENDS OF  
OLD HONOLULU



# Hawaiian Legends Of Old Honolulu

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## FOREWORD

The legends of a people are of interest to the scholar, the thinker, and the poet.

The legends tell us of the struggles, the triumphs, and the wanderings of the people, of their thoughts, their aspirations; in short, they give us a twilight history of the race.

As the geologist finds in the rocks the dim records of the beginnings of life on our planet, the first foreshadowings of the mighty forests that have since covered the lands, and of the countless forms of animal life that have at last culminated in Man, so does the historian discover in the legends of a people the dim traces of its origin and development till it comes out in the stronger light of the later day.

So it is with the legends of the Hawaiians, or of the Polynesian race. We see them, very indistinctly, starting from some distant home in Asia, finally reaching the Pacific Ocean, and then gradually spreading abroad over its islands till they dominate a large portion of its extent.

In bringing together this collection of Hawaiian legends, the author of this little book has conferred a great favor upon all those residents of Hawaii and of those visitors to its shores who may take an interest in its original inhabitants, once an exceedingly numerous people, but now a scattering remnant only. To that native race this little book will be at once a joy and a sorrow; to the heart of the *haole*, who has lived among them, known them intimately for thirty years or more (as has the writer of this

Foreword), and learned to love them, this collection of the legends of old Honolulu brings a warm "Aloha!"

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## INTRODUCTION

The ancient Hawaiians were not inventive. They did not study new methods of house-building or farming. They did not seek new tools or new weapons. They could live comfortably as their ancestors lived. But they were imaginative and therefore told many a wonderful tale of gods and goblins and men. Some of these stories were centuries old, and were closely akin to legends told in Tahiti, Samoa, Fiji, New Zealand and many other islands of the Pacific Ocean. Most of them were of course limited to the locality from which they came. The Honolulu legends belong to this class almost entirely, although a student of Polynesian mythology will find many traces of connecting links with the mythology of far distant islands.

The legends of Old Honolulu have been compiled from stories told by the old Hawaiians. Some of them came from those still living, but many have been found in the files of papers published from 1850 to 1870.

The first alphabet for Hawaiians was prepared in 1821. The Hawaiians were taught to read and write their histories and ancient stories as rapidly as possible. This was the result of the labors of the American missionaries. Some of the missionaries, notably Mr. Dibble, sent their pupils out to write down and preserve the old legends and traditions. Between thirty and forty years after the first lesson in the alphabet the Hawaiians were writing articles for papers published regularly in their own language--such as *Ka Hae Hawaii* (*The Hawaiian Flag*), *Ke Kuokoa* (*The*

*Independent*), *Ka Hoku Pakipika* (*The Star of the Pacific*). These were followed by many papers down to the present time edited solely by Hawaiians.

Careful research through these papers brings many stories of the past into the hands of students. It is chiefly in this way that these legends of Old Honolulu have been gathered together. This is the result of several years' work of note-taking and compilation.

These legends belong of course to Honolulu people, and will be chiefly interesting to them and those who are acquainted with the city and the island of Oahu. It is hoped that the folk-lore lovers the world over will also enjoy comparing these tales with those of other lands.

Sometimes these old stories have been touched up and added to by the Hawaiian story-teller who has had contact with foreign literature, and the reader may trace the influence of modern ideas; but this does not occur frequently.

The legend of "Chief Man-eater" comes the nearest to historic times. Cannibalism was not a custom among the ancient Hawaiians. These are unquestionably sporadic cases handed down in legends.

These legends have been printed in the following papers and magazines: *The Friend*, *The Paradise of the Pacific*, *The Mid-Pacific*, *Thrum's Hawaiian Annual*, *Historical Society Reports*, *The Advertiser* and *Star Bulletin*, published in Honolulu.

THE AUTHOR.

## **PRONUNCIATION**

"A syllable in Hawaiian may consist of a single vowel, or a consonant united with a vowel or at most of a consonant and two vowels, never of more than one consonant. The accent of five-sixths of the words is on the penult, and a few proper names accent the first syllable.

In Hawaiian every syllable ends in a vowel and no syllable can have more than three letters, generally not more than two and a large number of syllables consist of single letters--vowels. Hence the vowel sounds greatly predominate over the consonant. The language may therefore appear monotonous to one unacquainted with its force.

In Hawaiian there is a great lack of generic terms, as is the case with all uncultivated languages. No people have use for generic terms until they begin to reason and the language shows that they were better warriors and poets than philosophers and statesmen. Their language, however, richly abounds in specific names and epithets.

The general rule, then, is that the accent falls on the penult; but there are many exceptions and some words which took the same to the eye take on entirely different meanings by different tones, accents, or inflections.

The study of these kaaos or legends would demonstrate that the Hawaiians possessed a language not only adapted to their former necessities but capable of being used in introducing the arts of civilized society and especially of pure morals, of law, and the religion of the Bible."

The above quotations are from Lorrin Andrew's Dictionary of the Hawaiian Language, containing some 15,500 Hawaiian words, printed in Honolulu in 1865.

## **HAWAIIAN VOWELS**

*a* is sounded as in father

*e* is sounded as in they

*i* as in marine

*o* as in note

*u* rule or as *oo* in moon

*ai* when sounded as a diphthong resembles English *ay*

*au* when sounded as a diphthong resembles *ou* as in loud

The consonants are *h*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *p*, and *w*. No distinction is made between *k* and *t* or *l* and *r*, and *w* sounds like *v* between the penult and final syllable of a word.

## **I. THE MIGRATION OF THE HAWAIIANS**

THE fountain source of the Mississippi has been discovered and rediscovered. The origin of the Polynesian race has been a subject for discovery and rediscovery. The older theory of Malay origin as set forth in the earlier encyclopædias is now recognized as untenable. The Malays followed the Polynesians rather than preceded them. The comparative study of Polynesian legends leads almost irresistibly to the conclusion that the Polynesians were Aryans, coming at least from India to Malasia and possibly coming from Arabia, as Fornander of Hawaii so earnestly argues. It is now accepted that the Polynesians did not originate from Malay parentage, and that they did occupy for an indefinite period the region around the Sunda Straits from Java to the Molucca Islands, and also that the greater portion of the Polynesians was driven out from this region and scattered over the Pacific in the early part of the Christian Era. The legends that cluster around Wakea have greatly aided in making plain some things concerning the disposition of the Polynesians. By sifting the legends of Hawaii-loa we learn how the great voyager becomes one of the first Vikings of the Pacific. His home at last is found to be Gilolo of the Molucca Islands. From the legends we become acquainted with Wakea (possibly meaning "noonday," or "the white time") and his wife Papa (earth), the most widely remembered of all the ancestors of the Polynesian race. Their names are found in the legends of the most prominent island groups, and the highest places

are granted them among the demi-gods and sometimes among the chief deities. Their deeds belong to the most ancient times--the creation or discovery of the various islands of the Pacific world. Those who worshipped Wakea and Papa are found in such widely separated localities that it must be considered impossible for even a demi-god to have had so many homes. Atea, or Wakea, was one of the highest gods of the Marquesas Islands. Here his name means "light." The Marquesans evidently look back of all their present history and locate Atea in the ancient homeland. Vatea in the Society Islands, Wakea in Hawaii and New Zealand, Makea, Vakea and Akea are phonetic variations of the one name when written down by the students who made a written form for words repeated from generation to generation by word of mouth alone. Even under the name "Wakea" this ancient chief is known in most widely separated islands. The only reasonable explanation for this widespread reference to Wakea is that he was an ancestor belonging in common to all the scattered Polynesians. It seems as if there must have been a period when Wakea was king or chief of a united people. He must have been of great ability and probably was the great king of the United Polynesians. If this were the fact it would naturally result that his memory would be carried wherever the dispersed race might go.

In the myths and legends of the Hervey Islands, Vatea is located near the beginning of their national existence. First of all the Hervey Islanders place Te-ake-ia-roe (The root of all existence). Then there came upon the ancient world Te Vaerua (The breath, or The life). Then came the god time--Te Manawa roa (The long ago). Then their creation legends locate Vari, a woman whose name means "the beginning," a name curiously similar to the Hebrew word "bara," "to create," as in Gen. i. 1. Her children were torn out of her breasts and given homes in the ancient mist-land, with which, without any preparation or introduction, Hawaiki is