Analysing the Origin of Māui the Semi-Divine Trickster in Polynesian Mythology*

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Analýza pôvodu polobožského kultúrneho hrdinu Māuiho v polynézskej mytológii

Resumé Kultúrny hrdina Māui je fenomén, ktorý sa objavuje takmer vo všetkých mytologických systémoch Polynézie. Pozoruhodný je jeho pôvod, ktorý je zvyčajne sčasti božský a sčasti ľudský. Príspevok analyzuje rôzne varianty polynézskych mýtov a zameriava sa najmä na informácie týkajúce sa jeho pôvodu, okolností narodenia, varianty mien rodičov a súrodencov.

Abstract The cultural hero Māui is a phenomenon that occurs in nearly all the mythological systems of Polynesia. His origin is remarkable and is mostly partly divine and partly human. This paper analyses different variants of the Polynesian myths about Māui, especially focusing on his origin, the circumstances of his birth and variants of his parents' names and siblings.

Keywords Polynesia, Mythology · Māui, Analysis of Variants in the Tradition

A trickster or culture hero is a mythical being found in the mythologies of many archaic societies. In some mythologies, the culture hero is given a divine origin; in others he is a demigod or only a spirit that acts on the command of a higher deity. Prometheus, for example, was of a purely divine origin. According to Hesiod's *Theogony,* he was the son of Iapetus and the Oceanid Clymene.

Māui of Polynesia is an example of a culture hero who was present in most versions of myths of semi-divine origin: in Maori mythology he came from the

lineage of Tu-mata-uenga, and in Hawaiian mythology his mother was the goddess Hina-a-he-ahi ('Hina of the fire'). All available versions agree that after he was abandoned by his mother, he was raised and taught magical skills by the gods.

Many researchers have attempted to elucidate the complex problem of the origin of the figure of the culture hero by looking for the general cause of his coming into existence. Some have searched for his historical roots; others have concluded that the actions of culture heroes in mythical stories mirrored cosmic-meteorological and astronomical phenomena, and that the characters themselves should be viewed as solar, lunar and astral heroes. Many known typologies and definitions of culture heroes are inevitably imprecise because culture heroes in myths are much more diverse, depending on the local traditions into which they were born and external interethnic influences.

While all characters of culture heroes stem from an original, undifferentiated and syncretic complex of ideas as well as religious, mythological, ethnic and aesthetic concepts and opinions, we are compelled to assume that they came into existence in different ways depending on which characteristic features locally prevailed.[1]

While in the European context Prometheus of Greece is the most famous culture hero, the mythological figure of Māui has the same status among the Polynesian peoples. Of all the myths from Polynesia, probably none have been more frequently quoted than those which recount the deeds and adventures of Māui the demigod. Among the Polynesians themselves, almost every group had its own versions of the tales, except for Tuvalu Island in the west of Polynesia and Easter Island in the east. The large number of variants, many of which have fortunately been recorded, make the Māui cycle one of the most important for the study of this whole area.[2]

W. D. Westervelt, who gathered many stories about Māui in publications on several islands, wrote that the Māui myths are one of the strongest links in

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1 Ján Komorovský, *Únoscovia ohňa. Mýty a legendy o kultúrnych hrdinoch a zrode civilizácií* [Seizers of the Fire. Myths and Legends on Cultural Heroes and the Birth of Civilization Birth] (Bratislava: Tatran, 1986), 22–23.

2 Roland B. Dixon, *Oceanic Mythology. The Mythology of all Races* (New York: Cooper Square, 1964), 41.

the mythological chain of evidence binding the scattered inhabitants of the Pacific into one nation.[3]

The Māui legends are of considerable antiquity. Of course, it is impossible to give any definite date, but there can scarcely be any question that they originated among the ancestors of the Polynesians before they scattered over the Pacific Ocean.[4]

There are three centres for these legends: New Zealand in the south, Hawaii in the north, and the Tahitian group of islands, including the Cook Islands, in the west. 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.[5]

In the major islands of Western Polynesia, such as Tonga and Samoa, the same legends are present in more or less a fragmentary condition.[6] Māui's stories are also known in Melanesia among the Polynesian Outliers.[7]

Researchers into Polynesian mythology have been involved in many debates about the origin of the figure of Māui. According to collectors in the 19th century, Māui was a real person whose great feats of navigation and leadership made his name immortal. His followers and descendants elevated him to the rank of demigod and surrounded him with more and more mythical deeds as the years rolled on. Māui may well have been a real navigator or discoverer. More accurately, someone by the name of Māui may have existed in ancient times as a leader. Polynesians have the custom of deifying distinguished ancestors and of mixing fact and fiction when discussing them.[8]

If a god is defined as a supernatural being who is worshipped, then Māui is rarely classified as a god. Evidence in the form of hearsay, statements by natives or actual observations and experiences of Europeans showing that Māui had worshippers are so rare, obscure and uncorroborated as to be practically absent or atypical. More often they identify him as a demigod and a spirit who was once

3 William D. Westervelt, *Legends of Māui. A Demigod of Polynesia and his Mother Hina* (Honolulu: The Hawaiian Gazette Co., 1910), 7.

4 *Ibid.,* 3.

5 It should be noted that these island groups are inhabited by closely related peoples who speak Eastern Polynesian languages.

6 Westervelt, *Legends of Māui,* 2.

7 Fiji, the New Hebrides, Ulawa, Tikopia, Ontong Java and Santa Cruz.

8 Katherine Luomala, *Māui of a Thousand Tricks: His Oceanic and European Biographers* (Honolulu: Bernice Bishop Museum, 1949), 18–19.

an ancestor of supernatural skill. The fundamental conflict in Māui's personality is implied in the Polynesian dual classification of him in terms of both his divine and earthly rank. For Tahitians he is a *tupua*[9] and for Hawaiians a *kupua,* a super–natural being and wonder-working trickster who is half-human and half-god. When Tuamotuans talk of Māui as a person who once lived but who is now dead, they call him an *atua*, which to them is any unusual being with supernatural or 'supernormal' qualities. Society Islanders regard an *atua* as a god of high rank.[10]

Tongans usually say that the Māui family is part of the order of created gods who are not spiritual beings like the Tangaloa family. Such is the case in Tonga, where Māui is closely associated with the land in Mangaia, where he is a guardian of the earth.[11] S. Percy Smith, the former governor of Niue, writes that in Niuean mythology Māui is not a god but merely a hero who gained much glory through his actions.[12] In his book *Savage Island*, Thomson considers Māui to be like the Loki of the Nibelung myth.[13] According to Gifford, Māui was a culture hero and demigod in Tonga.[14] In the book *Ethnology of Mangareva,* Te Rangi Hiroa says that the Mangarevans regard Māui as a hero with supernatural powers, but they do not worship him; he intervenes in their chronology between the gods and legendary heroes.[15]

Māui is neither a primal god in Polynesian genealogies nor a child of the primal parents. The Maori do not include him among the children of Rangi and Papa. He was born several generations later. He is not among the first

9 The word tupua, tupu'a, etc., is also known in Western Polynesia: e.g. in Niuean as tupua, '1. giant, legendary creature, monster, 2. ancient god'; in Tongan as tupu'a, 'ancient, venerable, historic'; and in Samoan as tupua, 'idol'.

10 Luomala, *Māui of a Thousand Tricks,* 125.

11 Wyatt G. Gill, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1876), 51.

12 Stephenson Percy Smith, »Niue Island and its People«, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 11,4 (1902), 197.

13 Basil Thomson, *Savage Island, An Account of a Sojourn in Niue and Tonga* (Edinburgh; London: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1902), 84.

14 Edward W. Gifford, *Tongan Society* (Honolulu: B. P. Bishop Museum, 1924), 290–291.

15 Te Rangi Hiroa *alias* Peter Buck, *Ethnology of Mangareva* (Honolulu: B. P. Bishop Museum, 1932), 306.

Marquesan gods of creation who emerged after the separation of »the level above« from »the level below«.[16]

Māui usually does not appear earlier than three of four generations after the birth of the children of the primeval parents. For example, the genealogy of a noble family of the Maori Tuhoe tribe begins with Rangi and Papa, whose child was Tane, the father of Hine-ahu-one, the first woman. Tane married his daughter and begat two more girls, who also became his wives. Next in the genealogy is Muri-ranga-whenua, whose jawbone Māui later took as a weapon. Muri's child was Taranga, the mother of Māui.[17] From Māui-tikitiki the line of descent is traced down to the most recent chief in this distinguished genealogy.[18]

In certain Rarotongan genealogies which name almost a hundred ancestors back from 1900 CE, the Māui family appears between the seventieth and eightieth names.[19] In Mangaia, Māui-tikitiki is in the fifth generation.[20]

16 E. S. Craighill Handy, *The Native Culture in the Marquesas* (Honolulu: B. P. Bishop Museum, 1923), 244.

17 Hence the name given to him in Maori, 'Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga'.

18 Elsdon Best, *Tuhoe: the Children of the Mist*, (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1925), 761.

19 Stephenson Percy Smith, »Hawaiki: The Whence of the Maori«, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 7,3 (1898), 137–177.

20 Peter Buck, *Mangaian Society* (Honolulu: B. P. Bishop Museum, 1934), 25.

Plate 1
Māui Fishing Up the Island (author: Wilhelm Dittmer).[21]

21 Wilhelm Dittmer (1866–1909). The illustration is from his book *Te Tohunga* (London: Routledge, 1907), 49.

Rarotongan history presents Māui as a son of Tangaroa and Hina as a daughter of Vai-takere as well as the wife of Tangaroa. According to Smith's calculations, if the Vai-takere in question is identical with the person of this name who appears in Rarotongan genealogies, this would place Māui and Hina as early as the first century CE.[22]

Māui is generally described as one of a series of brothers varying from three to eight in number. Only one version of the myth from the island of Manihiki in the Cook Islands says that Māui was an only child.

As in hero tales generally, Māui is usually the youngest child. In New Zealand in particular the older siblings are described as stupid or forgetful, while Māui, the hero, is clever or mischievous.[23]

This motif is particularly developed in the Melanesian myths, that often record two brothers and in which there is sometimes a greater antithesis of good and evil than is implied in the Polynesian myths.

It is interesting to note that this culture hero is considered to be the youngest of the siblings and simultaneously the most intelligent and clever in all of the mythological versions because the youngest child had an ignominious position in ancient Polynesian society.

In all of the myths, Māui's brothers distrusted him for the very tricks he showed them in the hope that they would admire and like him. Instead of this, they became more jealous of him. Sometimes they were malicious, but it was more often the case that they did not recognize how inferior their magic was to his or what great deed he had in mind. Māui's brothers were conservative, well-behaved and respected in the community. They did everything the way tradition and convention dictated. Māui, however, considered them weaklings.

1 *Māui in the Mythology of Eastern Polynesia*

The Māori say that Māui is descended from the lineage of Tu-mata-uenga and that his deeds overshadowed those of his elder brothers. According to John White, his mother's name was Ta-ranga and his father's name Ira-whaki; they

22 Smith, »Hawaiki: The Whence of the Maori«, 154.

23 John White, *The Ancient History of the Māori. His Mythology and Traditions: Hoto-Uta or Taki-Tumu Migration;* 4 vols. (Wellington: George Didsbury, Government Printer, 1886–1889), 2: 64, 110, 117, 119, 126; Westervelt, *Legends of Māui,* 17; Gill, *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific,* 64.

had five children: Māui-mua (the first Māui), Māui-roto (Māui of the inside), Māui-taha (Māui of the side), Māui-pae (Māui stretched out) and Māui-tiki-tiki-a-taranga (Māui of the topknot of Ta-ranga).[24]

George Grey has written that one of the stories told by so many Māui was on five brothers named Māui-mua, Māui-pae, Māui-taha, Māui-roto and Māui-potiki. The last one was also known as Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga, and this child, the youngest of the brothers, is the one around whom so many marvellous stories cluster. Some curious statements occur with regard to Māui; one says that one of his eyes was like an eel and the other was like greenstone. One of his names is Māui-matawaru, which may be rendered as 'eight-eyed Māui', yet the Western Pacific word *matavaru* means 'wise' or 'wisdom', and this is probably the meaning in the above case. A Rarotongan account of Māui states that he had eight heads, which should have endowed him with a fairly large number of eyes.[25]

Māui came into the world under unusual circumstances. According to many myths, he was abandoned by his mother and he did not start looking for his parents until he grew up.

According to the New Zealand myth, Māui the culture hero was born prematurely and because he was wrapped up in hair from the topknot-tikitiki of his mother, Taranga, his full name was Māui-tikitiki a Taranga.[26]

In most Polynesian myths, Taranga was the name of his father. In his book *The Coming of the Māori,* Te Rangi Hiroa writes that he wondered why Māui's mother should have had a topknot when women were supposed to have short hair.

24 White, *The Ancient History of the Māori,* 2: 63.

25 Elsdon Best, *The Māori,* 2 vols. (Wellington: Harry H. Tombs, 1924), 1: 142.

26 Authors use several variants of the names of Māui and his parents, but there is no doubt that they always refer to the same mythological figures.

Plate 2
Taranga Putting Māui Into the Sea (author: Andrew Burdan).[27]

27 Available at <careers.govt.nz/educators-practitioners/tools-and-activities/the-magic-of-myths/how-maui-got-his-nameka-tapaina-a-maui/> (last retrieval 6 Oct 2014).

Instead, men wore their long hair tied in a knot on top of their head. It almost seems as if the mother had stolen her husband's topknot as well as his name.[28]

According to Luomala, men sometimes swept up their hair (which both sexes often let grow long) on the top of their heads, bundled it into a big knot, and fastened it with various ornaments. According to certain storytellers in New Zealand and the Society Islands, Māui received the name of Tikitiki because his mother wrapped him up as an abortion or blood clot in a length of her hair.[29] According to the Poata version, Māui developed from a drop of her blood. His name recalls the incident. A Polynesian mythological character named Tiki is often said to have been the first human being, a kind of Polynesian Adam. Some theorists who believe in Māui and Tiki identically regard Māui's epithet Tikitiki as a compound of Tiki.[30]

According to K. Luomala, Taranga swaddled him gently in hair cut from her topknot *(tikitiki)* and laid him on the cradling ocean waves with a prayer to the gods to look after her unfinished baby, her last child. The gods found and nursed him until they had made him into a healthy and bright but odd-looking little boy who learned their secrets of magic. He added these to his own mischievous notions with devastating results for the staid upper world where his foster parents lived.[31]

According to one version from the Society Islands, Māui-ti'iti'i is the great grandson of Atea and Faahoutu. He is the grandson of Ru-the-propper-up-of-the-sky and the son of Ru's daughter, Uahea (Huahenga), and Hihi-ra (Sun-ray). The other children were Māui-mua, Māui-muri, Māui-roto, Māui-taha and Māui-potii. Māui-ti'iti'i, the sixth and youngest child in the family, is also called Māui-of-the-placenta. Another version of Māui's parentage in the Society Islands gives Tara'a (Taranga) as the father, which is more in keeping with the rest of Polynesia. Māui, born prematurely and enveloped in the placenta, looks like a jellyfish. His parents, not knowing there is a living thing in the ugly afterbirth, wrap it in a girdle of breadfruit bark, tie it with a hairdress *(ti'iti'i)*, and cast it into the sea with a prayer. His ancestors of the sea, Roura and Rofero, the sons of Taaroa and Papa-raharaha, find the bundle, open it and see a little boy

28 Te Rangi Hiroa alias Peter Buck, *The Coming of the Māori* (Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1950), 4.

29 Luomala, *Māui of a Thousand Tricks,* 27.

30 Tamati R. Poata, *The Māori as a Fisherman and his Methods* (Opotiki: W. B. Scott & Sons, 1919).

31 Luomala, *Māui of a Thousand Tricks,* 3.

with one large head and six small ones around the neck. They nurse him in the coral cave beneath the ocean until he grows up.[32]

The Tuamotu is also home to well-known motifs from the Māui cycle. According to J. F. Stimson, Māui-tikitiki-a-Ataraga is the son of Ataranga. Ataranga is his father. His mother is Hua-henga.

In the book *Tuamotuan Legends,* J. F. Stimson quotes this chant:

Ataraga te metua	Ataraga is the father
—hakarere i te tama	—who sent the child away
Ka garo atu e ki te ara e Mahuike, ere, hui, i!	Vanishing over the pathway of the sea leading to Mahuike, alas!
Ataraga te metua	Ataraga is the father
Ataraga te metua	Ataraga is the father
—mehara kore	—who had long ceased to hold in memory
i te tama	the child
Ka garo atu ki te tere o Huahega, ere, hui, i!	Borne to remote shores upon the voyage of Huahega, alas!
Te tama te mea hakaaroha	The child was moved with fond recollections
Te tama te mea hakaaroha	The child was moved with fond memories
—ki te kaiga,	—of the homeland,
Ka garo ki te ara maomao o te metua, ere, hui, i!	Vanishing afar over the sea-path of the mother, alas!
Te tama te mea hakaaroha	The child recalled in loving tenderness
Te tama te mea hakaaroha	The child recalled with unfailing love and tenderness
—i te metua,	—the father,
Kimia mai te ara nohoga o te metua, ere, hui, i!	The child, retracing the lost pathway of the sea leading to the father's side, oh, joy!
Te tama te mea hakaaroha	The child was inspired with affection

32 *Ibid.,* 144.

Te tama te mea hakaaroha	The child was inspired with love and tender affection
—tukua ki roto i te manava,	—changelessly abiding in the heart,
E aru te tama i te metua, ere, hui, i, i, i, e!	Ever the child sought the pathway to the father, oh, joy indeed! [33]

J. F. Stimson dealt with the Māui stories in detail and attempted to eliminate obvious biblical parallels from the texts by relying on a version from Fangatau Atoll in the Tuamotu Islands, which he considered the least affected by external influences.[34] In the Anaa version (Tuamotu), Māui-tikitiki is the fifth son of Ataraga and Chiefess Huahenga, daughter of the magician Mahuike who controls fire and to whose home Huahenga retires after the birth of her fifth son. In a version written by T. Henry from Rangiroa Island, Māuiti'iti'i is the youngest of the six sons of the god Tangaroa and his mortal wife Uahea or Huahenga.[35]

In Marquesan mythology there are seven legendary Māui brothers in the Marquesan Māui cycle. The eldest was Māui-mua and the youngest was Māui-tikitiki. Between them were Māui-mu'i, Māui-pae and Māui-taha. If we substitute Māui-roto for Māui-mu'i, we have exactly the same names as in the New Zealand family of five. The two other brothers are Māui-vaveka and Māui-hakatata-mai; these were probably alternative names for two from an original family of five, but over the course of time they have come to be regarded as distinct individuals, thus raising the number of the family to seven.[36]

Marquesan myths had evidently been partially forgotten when they were first recorded in writing long after European contact. The creation myths lack a lot of details that the old priests must have known. However, some of the general themes have been transmitted in a confused form that may yet be translated by those who can interpret the displaced sequence of events.

In the Cook Islands, the most widespread legends state that Māui's father was »the supporter of the heavens« and his mother »the guardian of the road to the invisible world«. His father's name was Ru and his mother's name Puataranga

33 John F. Stimson *Tuamotuan Legends (Island of Anaa). The Demigods* (Honolulu: B. P. Bishop Museum, 1937) <starling.rinet.ru/kozmin/polynesia/tuamotus.php> (last retrieval 2 Sep 2014).

34 Stimson, *Tuamotuan Legends (Island of Anaa). The Demigods*, 7–46.

35 Henry Teuira, *Ancient Tahiti* (Honolulu: B. P. Bishop Museum, 1928), 352–353.

36 Te Rangi Hiroa, *Vikings of the Sunrise* (Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1964), 159.

or Bua-Taranga. On Manihiki Island (Cook Islands) his father is Manuahifare and his mother is Tongifare. These two names are totally different from others in Polynesia. According to Savage, there is a version of the Māui family from Rarotonga (Cook Islands), according to which Ataranga and his wife Te Mutu-a-Uenga have five Māui children – Mua, Roto, Taa, Teina and Tikitiki-a-Taranga.[37]

These legends say that four mighty beings lived in the old world from which their ancestors came. This old world bore the name Ava-iki.[38] The four gods were Māuike, Ra, Ru and Bua-Taranga. The last two are in some versions of myths concerning Māui's parents.

Ru, the supporter of the heavens, married Buataranga, the guardian of the lower world. Their only child was Māui. The legends of Raro-Tonga state that Māui's father and mother were the children of Tangaroa (Kanaloa in Hawaiian), the great god worshipped throughout Polynesia. There were three Māui brothers and one sister, Ina-ika (Ina, the fish).[39]

In his book *Ethnology of Mangareva (Gambier Islands)*, Peter Buck mentions a story about Māui given by Ioane Mamatui. He says that while the name of Māui's father is forgotten, his mother was Toa-rupe, the daughter of Te Rupe.[40] However, in Bishop Maigret's diary the name of Māui's father is given as Nauaenga. Luomala claimed that Māui father's name was Taranga and his mother's names were Uaenga and Toa-te-rupe, according to her father's name Te Rupe. She wrote that Maigret, who gives Nauenga as the father of Māui and Toa-te-rupe as the mother, apparently misunderstood his informant. *Na* is a prefix meaning *from*; Nauenga means *from Uaenga*.[41]

Like versions from the other Polynesian islands, the fragments of the myth from the island of Mangareva also speak of Māui's untraditional birth. He was born from a blood clot from Uaenga's navel. Te Rupe, his grandfather, found the clot in a Barringronia tree and took it to his home in the underworld, where he

37 Stephen Savage, »The Rarotongan Version of the Story of Rata«, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 19 (no 75, 1910), 143–144.

38 According to all mythologies from Eastern Polynesia, Avaiki (or Hawaiki), Hawai'i, is the cradle of Polynesians as well as the place where their souls return after death.

39 Westervelt, *Legends of Māui,* 9.

40 Te Rangi Hiroa alias Peter Buck, *Ethnology of Mangareva,* 310.

41 Luomala, *Māui of a Thousand Tricks,* 153.

reared it into a boy of whom he become very fond. He taught Māui magical knowledge and gave him magical weapons.[42]

According to Maigret's diary, Toa-rupe had eight children, the seventh being Tumai-auia. Māui was the last or eighth child, hence the name matavaru (eight). He was made much of *'aka'ere'ere* by his grandfather, Te Rupe, and also by his mother. Because of this, his elder brothers were jealous of him.[43]

It is interesting that in the diary Māui-mua, Māui-muri, Māui-taha, Māui-roto and Māui-aka-tikitiki-a-taga are included among the gods. This corresponds to the Māori version of five Māui brothers, but in the Māori version, Māui-pae occurs instead of Māui-muri, while the last named is Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga. In the Māori version, Taranga is the mother instead of Toa-rupe, and Rupe is another name for the eldest Māui.

According to Hawaiian genealogies, Māui and his brothers were placed among the descendants of Ulu and »the sons of Kii«, and Māui was one of the ancestors of Kamehameha, the first king of the united Hawaiian Islands. This would place him in the seventh or eighth century CE. However, it is more probable that Māui belongs to the mist-land of time.[44]

In the Hawaii Islands, Māui is known as Māui-ki'iki'i, which is analogous to the name 'Māui-tikitiki'. The minor difference between the names is caused by the linguistic differences between the Hawaiian and the Māori languages.

According to the Kumulipo, a very popular Hawaiian chant of the creation of the world, Hine-a-he-ahi and her husband Akalana had four children: Māui-the-first (Māui-mua), Māui-the middle (Māui-waena), Māui-the-littlest (Māui-Ki'iki'i) and Māui-of-the-loincloth (Māui-a-ka-malo). Māui-of-the-loincloth, the hero, was born as an egg which hatched into a bird that next assumed a human form.[45]

Another story says that Hina was walking one day and found a red loincloth which she wrapped around her waist. Her husband, Akalana, to whom she showed it, called it a gift from of the gods and a sign that their next child would have mana.[46] Kalakaua and Liliuokalani introduce this chant of Māui:

42 Katherine Luomala, »Notes on the Development of Polynesian Hero-Cycles«, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 49 (no 195, 1940), 367–374.

43 Te Rangi Hiroa alias Peter Buck, *Ethnology of Mangareva,* 310.

44 Westervelt, *Legends of Māui. A Demigod of Polynesia and his Mother Hina*, 8.

45 Luomala, *Māui of a Thousand Tricks,* 122.

46 *Ibid.,* 122.

Waolena was the husband, Mahuie was the wife,
Akalana was the husband, Hina-a-ke-ahi was the wife,
Māui-the-firstborn was born, Māui-the-middle-child was born,
Māui-the-littlest (ki'iki'i) was born, Māui-of-the-loincloth was born,
Girded with the loincloth of Akalana.
Hina-of-the-fire was pregnant and bore a cock,
Hina delivered her child in the form of an egg;
She had not lived with a cock
But a cock was born to her.

The cock crowed 'alala!' Hina was puzzled,
She had not lived with a man but a child was born,
A mysterious child for Hina-of-the-fire.
Kia-loa and Kia-a-ka-poko were both angry,
The brothers of Hina,
Two of the four Kia.
Māui fought, those Kia fell,
Red blood flowed from the forehead of Māui,
That was Māui's first strife.
He fetched the bunch of black-stemmed awa from Kane and Kanaloa,
That was Māui's second strife.
The third strife was the quarrel over the strainer;
The fourth was that over the bamboo of Kane and Kanaloa;
The fifth strife was that at the gathering for the wrist-turning contest.
The sixth had to do with his descent;
Māui asked who his father was,
Hina denied that he had a father,
The loincloth (malo) of Kalana was his father.
Hina-of-the-fire wanted fish;
He learned fishing; Hina commanded,
'Go fetch your father,
There is the line, the hook,
Come-here-from-the-heavens (Manai-a-ka-lani), that is the hook
For grappling the islands together, out of the ocean.'
He seized the great alae bird of Hina,
The bird sister of Pimoe;
This was the seventh strife of Māui.
The mischievous kupua it was whom he hooked,

The jaw, the mouth as it opened, of Pimoe,
The fish that was lord of the island that shakes the ocean.
Pimoe was pulled ashore dead by Māui.
He had pity for Mahanauluehu,
The child of Pimoe,
Māui brought him ashore and devoured all but the tail,
Pimoe lived through his tail,
Mahanauluehu was the tail he lived through.
Kane and Kanaloa were shaken from their foundation,
With the ninth strife of Māui.
Pe'ape'a carried away Hina-ke-ka,
The bat god was this Pe'ape'a,
This was the last strife of Māui,
He scratched out the eyes of the eight-eyed bat;
The strife ended with Moemoe.
Everyone knows of the strife of Māui with the Sun,
With the loop of the snaring cord of Māui;
Summer became the Sun's,
Winter became Māui's.
He drank the muddy waters of the plain
Of Kane and Kanaloa,
Strove by trickery,
Around Hawaii, around Māui,
Around Kauai, around Oahu;
At Kahalu'u is the afterbirth buried, at Waikane the navel string,
He died at Hakipu'u at Kualoa, Māui-of-the-loincloth,
The famous kupua of the island, A chief indeed.[47]

In the eastern version, Māui is not the child of Hina and Akalana in the natural way, but is begotten one day when Hina has a longing for seaweed and goes out to the beach at Kaanomalo to gather some; finding a man's loincloth on the beach, she puts it on and goes to sleep.

47 David Kalakaua, *The Legends and Myths of Hawaii, the Fables and Folklore of a Strange People* (New York: Charles L. Webster, 1888), 63–65; Liliuokalani, *An Account of the Creation of the World According to Hawaiian Tradition. Composed by Keaulumoku in 1700* (Boston, MA: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1897), 81–82.

2 *Māui in the Mythology of Western Polynesia*

We have only a few fragments of these myths from Western Polynesia. In the Tongan version there were three brothers, Māui-motu'a (old Māui), Māui-atalanga and Māui-kisikisi (dragonfly Māui), who was the culture hero. Their father was Māui-atalanga, but their mother's name is not mentioned in the sources.

According to Samoan mythology, one day an old man met Talaga on the road and recognized her immediately as the mother of the child he had with him. He explained to her how he had found the baby, whereupon she knew the man was telling the truth. Overjoyed at seeing her son, Talaga carried the boy home on her shoulder. Soon, the child became known as Ti'eti'e-a-Talaga ('Riding on Talaga').[48]

3 *Māui in the Mythology of the Polynesian Outliers*

In 1958 and 1959 Samuel Elbert and Torben Monberg recorded a great number of Māui myths on the islands of Rennell and Bellona in the Polynesian Outliers, where the culture hero is known by the New Zealand variant of the name, Māuitikitiki. These two researchers discovered an interesting version of the Māui myth which is not found on any of the Polynesian islands. The myth has it that 'Ataganga, Māui's father, kills his son and then brings him back to life. It also tells a very different story of Māui's origin and birth. According to a version that Elbert and Monberg recorded in March 1958 as recounted by Michael Mo, Māuitikitiki came out of the faeces of 'Ataganga.[49] Māuitikitiki leapt back and forth because it was hard to get out so 'Ataganga took the toadstool net of a child-of-a-member and caught Māuitikitiki and took him and made him his own son.[50] As recounted by John Ngatong in November 1958, Māui's father was called 'Atagangahenua. According to a myth as recounted by Taupongi, Māui-

48 See <hem.passagen.se/rairai/samoan_myths_and_legends.htm> (last retrieval 2 Sep 2014).

49 According to the version of the myths from the Rennell and Bellona Islands, 'Ataganga was Māui's father.

50 Samuel H. Elbert; Torben Monberg, *From the Two Canoes. Oral Traditions of Rennell and Bellona* (Copenhagen: Danish National Museum; Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1965), 110.

tikitiki had two younger brothers. This is rather unique as Māui is usually the youngest of all the brothers.

Area	*Origin of Māui*	*Birth of Māui*	*Māui's Mother*	*Māui's Father*	*Māui's Siblings (male if not specified)*
Eastern Polynesia					
New Zealand	Semi-divine	Born prematurely, wrapped up in hair from a topknot and thrown into the sea by his mother.	Taranga; Ta-ranga	Makeatutara; Ira-whaki	6, 5
Hawaii	Semi-divine	Was born as an egg which hatched into a bird that next assumed a human form.	Hine-a-he-ahi; Hina	Akalana; Hin-alau-ae	4
Society Islands	Semi-divine	Prematurely-born, looking like a jellyfish; his parents cast him into the sea.	Uahea; Huahenga	Tara'a; Taranga	6
Tuamotu	Semi-divine	?	Hua-henga (Tuamotu), Hina-hava (Fangatau), Uahea or Huahenga (Rangiroa)	Ataranga (Fangatau), Tangaroa (Rangiroa)	5 (Tuamotu), 4 (Fangatau), 6 (Rangiroa)
Mangaia	Semi-divine	?	Buataranga	Ru	none
Marquesas	?	?	?	?	7
Cook Islands	Semi-divine	?	Puataranga or Bua-Taranga; Tongifare (Manihiki Island); Hina (Rarotonga); Tongifare (Rarotonga)	Ru; Manuahifare (Manihiki Island); Tangaroa (Rarotonga); Manuhifare (Rarotonga).	Only child (Manihiki Island); 3 brothers, 1 sister (Rarotonga); 5 (Rarotonga)
Chatham Islands	?	?	Ranga-maomao	Tahiri-mangate	5
Mangareva	A hero	Born from a blood clot from Uaenga's navel.	Toa-rupe; Toa-te-rupe; Uaenga.	Taranga	8
Western Polynesia					
Tonga	Semi-divine	?	?	Māui-atalanga	3
Niue	A hero	?	?	?	—
Samoa	?	?	Talaga; Talanga	?	3
Polynesian Outliers					
Rennell, Bellona	?	Māuitikitiki came out of the feces of 'Ataganga.	?	'Ataganga; 'Atagangahenua	1, 1 sister

Plate 3
Māui's Origin, Birth, Parents and Siblings.

The table demonstrates that in almost all Polynesian societies whose mythologies have been recorded, Māui was considered a being with supernatural power. In most cases he was regarded as a demigod. Only the myths from Niue Island speak of him as being merely a hero. However, given that the mythology from this island has been preserved only in fragments, it is possible that in earlier times Niueans viewed Māui as belonging to the era of the gods. In terms of his origin, there are no apparent differences in the recorded myths of Eastern and Western Polynesia, yet it must be said that the myths of this culture hero are much scarcer in Western Polynesia, or rather that much fewer recordings of the myths have been preserved compared to Eastern Polynesia. Even if a more complex recording of the myth is available, it never speaks of the origin of this culture hero.

As is evident from the previous information and from the table that summarizes the details of Māui's origin and his parents' and sisters' births, there is a wide occurrence of these myths in Polynesia. Each of the mentioned myths speaks more or less of the culture hero's origin and family ties. The most self-contained of the myths are the myths from New Zealand and the Hawaiian

Islands. On the other hand, the myths from the Marquesas Islands, including the Māui myths, have been preserved only in fragments. As has been mentioned earlier, the reason for this is that they were the first islands to be visited by Europeans and the first visitors were not interested in local religious ideas and myths. By the time the first ethnologists started coming to these islands, the myths had sunk into such oblivion as a result of long-term contact with Europeans and only managed to be recorded in fragments. Although many of the myths have been preserved only in a significantly reduced form, the similarities between them are apparent.

There is not a single version of the myth in which Māui would have been born in a natural way. The circumstances of his birth are always unusual. It is interesting that although Māui possesses supernatural powers in his life, his birth is not impressive. He is portrayed in many versions of the myth as a prematurely-born child, incapable of life and abandoned by his mother.

At first glance his parents always seem to have different names, but this is not quite true. A closer look at the table reveals that there are two recurrent names: Taranga (in different language variations also Tara'a, Ataranga, Talaga, Taranga or Ataganga) and Hina (or Hine-a-he-ahi, Huahenga and so on). Only a few versions of the myth mention a different name (for example, Ru) which in itself is not strange, as in many cases Ru is Māui's mother's or father's father.

Māui's parents have different names in some myth versions from the Cook Islands, where his father is called Manuhifare and his mother Tongifare. In the Chatham Islands, Māui's father is Tahiri-mangate and his mother Ranga-maomao, yet this name also seems to have originated from the name Taranga. Taranga is the most frequently occurring name which sometimes refers to Māui's father and sometimes to his mother. The number of Māui's brothers ranges from zero (yet only two versions of the myth, one from the island of Manihiki in the Cook Islands and another from Mangaie, say that Māui had no brothers and sisters) to nine. Most myths state, however, that Māui had three or five brothers. Two versions from the island of Rarotonga in the Cook Islands and Rennell and Bellona even mention a sister. All myths bar one state that Māui was the youngest of the brothers and the most clever and bright of them all. This is worthy of note as Polynesians traditionally preferred their first-born sons.

A comparison between the Māui myths from Eastern and Western Polynesia shows that the main difference between them rests in the fact that the Māui myths from Western Polynesia have been preserved only in fragments. They do not recount his birth. His parents' names are scarcely mentioned and

they are always a variant of the name Talanga or ʻAtalanga. The myths of Western Polynesia state that Māui is one of three brothers. Although the Māui myths and motifs display certain differences, it is admirable that despite the large distance between individual Polynesian islands and despite the non-existence of a system of writing, there has been a relative homogeneity among the myths of this culture hero for centuries.

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