

# The Myths, Legends, and Mysteries of the Polynesians

The Polynesians have a rich cultural heritage that is steeped in myths, legends, and mysteries. These stories, passed down through generations, provide insights into their beliefs, traditions, and the way they viewed the world. In this article, we will explore some of the most captivating tales and enigmatic aspects of Polynesian culture.

## The Creation of the Polynesian Islands

One of the prevailing myths among the Polynesians is the creation of their islands. According to legend, the demigod Maui used a magical fishhook to pull the islands up from the depths of the ocean. This captivating story not only explains the origin of the islands but also illustrates the Polynesians' reverence for nature.

## The Legend of Pele, the Volcano Goddess

Another widely known legend among the Polynesians revolves around Pele, the volcano goddess. Pele is believed to reside in the volcanoes of Hawaii and is known for her fiery temper. The tales of her destructive power and the ability to create and shape the landscape have captivated generations of Polynesian people.

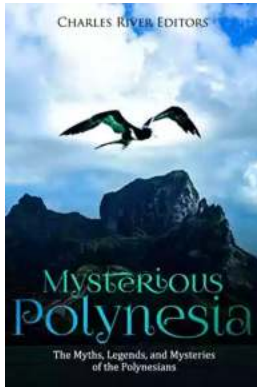
### Mysterious Polynesia: The Myths, Legends, and Mysteries of the Polynesians

by Charles River Editors(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 20052 KB



Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 82 pages
Lending	: Enabled



## **The Fantastic Voyages of the Polynesians**

The Polynesians were remarkable navigators, traveling vast distances across the Pacific Ocean using only the stars, currents, and their intuition. Their voyages were not mere explorations but rather complex missions intertwined with their myths and legends. The story of the legendary navigator Kupe, who discovered New Zealand, is one such example that continues to fascinate historians and storytellers alike.

## **The Mysteries of the Moai Statues**

When we think of Polynesian culture, the image of the monumental stone statues on Easter Island, known as Moai, often comes to mind. These enigmatic figures, carved by the Rapa Nui people, have puzzled researchers for centuries. Who created them, how were they transported, and what was their purpose? These questions continue to propel many theories and speculations about the mysteries surrounding the Moai statues.

## **The Symbolism in Polynesian Tattoos**

Polynesian tattoos are known for their intricate patterns and deep symbolism. Each motif has a unique meaning, reflecting elements of their myths, legends,

and cultural values. From the tiki symbols representing gods and goddesses to the tribal patterns representing family lineage, these tattoos have become a way for Polynesian people to express their identity and preserve their traditions.

## **The Mythical Creatures of Polynesian Folklore**

Polynesian folklore is teeming with captivating mythical creatures that are both fascinating and intimidating. The mo'o, a giant lizard often associated with water, is believed to be guardians of freshwater ponds and streams. The kasa-obake, a one-legged umbrella monster, is said to bring good luck if spotted. These creatures are ingrained in the fabric of Polynesian stories, adding depth and intrigue to their mythology.

## **The Legacy of Polynesian Storytelling**

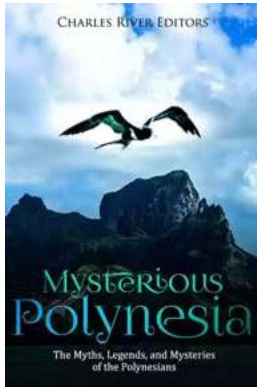
For the Polynesians, storytelling was not just entertainment but a way to preserve their history, culture, and spiritual beliefs. Through oral traditions, their myths and legends survived generations, fostering a strong sense of identity. Today, efforts are being made to keep this tradition alive, ensuring that the enchanting tales of the Polynesians continue to captivate and inspire future generations.

The myths, legends, and mysteries of the Polynesians offer a window into their captivating culture and worldview. From the creation of their islands to the symbolism in their tattoos, every aspect of their stories holds significant meaning. Exploring these narratives not only allows us to appreciate the rich heritage of the Polynesians but also provides insights into the universal human need for storytelling and the power it holds in shaping societies.

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\*Includes pictures

\*Includes a bibliography for further reading

\*Includes a table of contents

Taking into account similarities of appearance, customs and languages spread across a vast region of scattered islands, it was obvious that the Polynesian race emerged from a single origin, and that origin Cook speculated was somewhere in the Malay Peninsula or the “East Indies.” In this regard, he was not too far from the truth. The origins of the Polynesian race have been fiercely debated since then, and it was only relatively recently, through genetic and linguistic research, that it can now be stated with certainty that the Polynesian race originated on the Chinese mainland and the islands of Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. Oceania was, indeed, the last major region of the Earth to be penetrated and settled by people, and Polynesia was the last region of Oceania to be inhabited. The vehicle of this expansion was the outrigger canoe, and aided by tides and wind patterns, a migration along the Malay Archipelago, and across the wide expanses of the South Pacific, began sometime between 3000 and 1000 BCE, reaching the western Polynesian Islands in about 900 BCE.

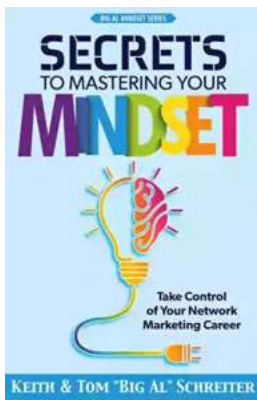
The name Polynesia derives from the ancient Greek meaning “many islands.” The word was first used to describe the entirety of the South Sea Islands by the 18th century French writer and traveler Charles de Brosses, but technically, Polynesia refers specifically to an area described by a vast triangle that stretches across the southern Pacific, with Hawaii, Easter Island and New Zealand serving as the points. Close to the center of this triangle lies Tahiti, with the west limit defined by Samoa and Tonga, with a slight irregularity in the western edge of the triangle that serves to exclude Fiji, the Solomon Islands, the New Hebrides, and a handful of Melanesian and Micronesian islands. The Melanesian demographic tends to differ quite dramatically from the Polynesian in both appearance and culture, the former tending to be of darker complexion, while the latter is more characteristic of the South Seas islanders of popular mythology.

Furthermore, not all of the islands included in the broad delineation of Polynesia are the tiny islets and atolls of popular imagination, resplendent with blue lagoons, white sand beaches and pristine coral reefs. Most are located within the tropics and have all the characteristics of an island paradise, but many others, such as Easter Island, the Chatham Islands, and New Zealand, lie well to the south and are, as a consequence, temperate in climate and biology.

While the timing of the populations’ movements can be accurately plotted, the motivations and methodology have tended to come to light only through the study of the oral tradition and the folklore associated with many dispersed, but culturally associated peoples. Indeed, when scholars go through the traditions and mythology passed down by people who are dispersed across thousands of miles of water and islands, they are amazed at the striking similarities. Typically, the cultural memories related to these waves of migration speak of warfare and internecine quarrels, often with the defeated chief or king leading an expedition

away and thereafter assuming the role of the “first man” in the creation of a new society and political structure.

Mysterious Polynesia: The Myths, Legends, and Mysteries of the Polynesians chronicles some of these remarkable stories, as well as lingering mysteries across the region. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Polynesia like never before.



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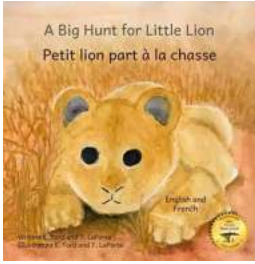
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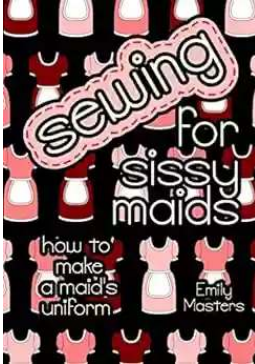
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