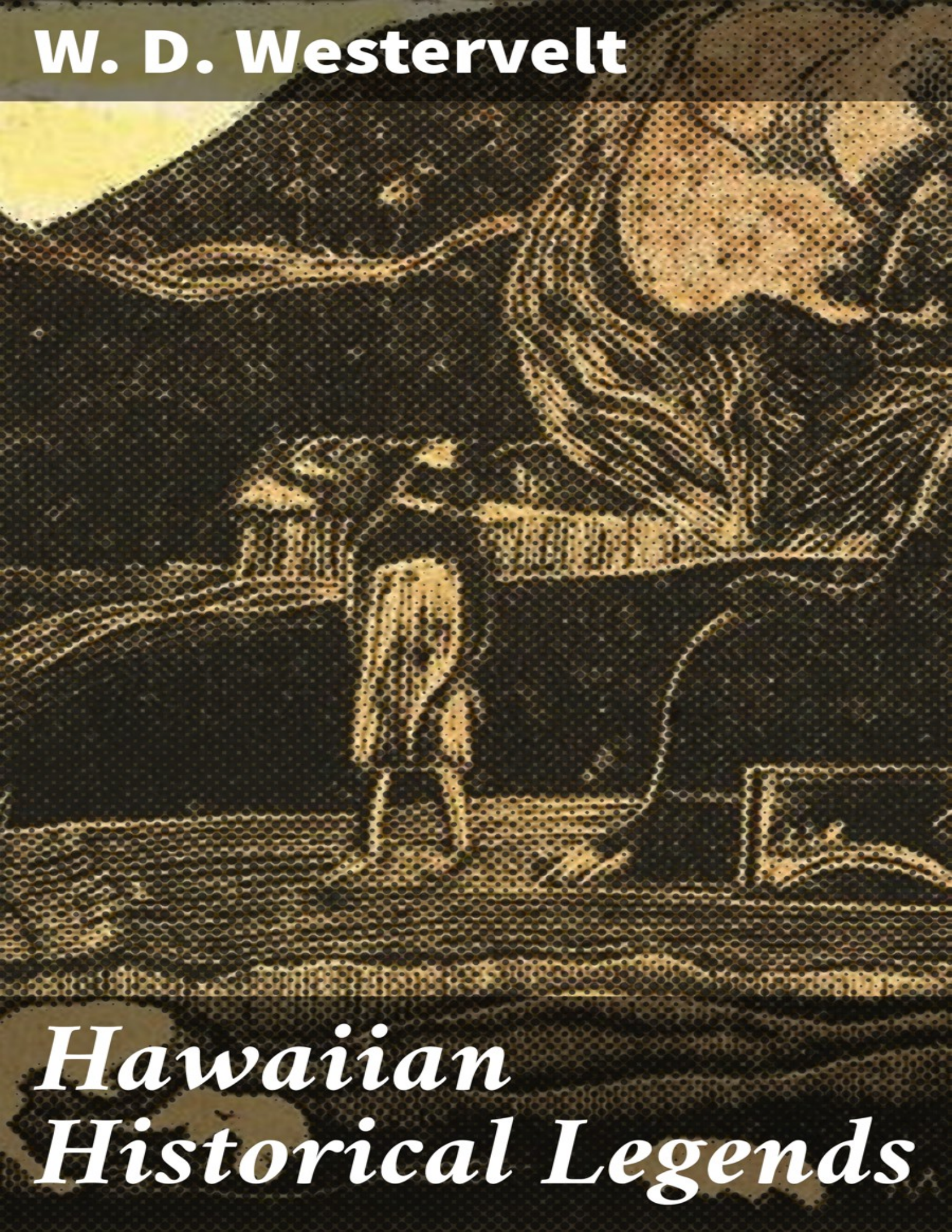


W. D. Westervelt



*Hawaiian
Historical Legends*

W. D. Westervelt

Hawaiian Historical Legends



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PREFACE

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From mist to sunshine—from fabled gods to a constitution and legislature as a Territory of the United States—this is the outline of the stories told in the present volume. This outline is thoroughly Hawaiian in the method of presentation. The old people rehearsed stories depending upon stories told before. They cared very little for dates. This is a book of stories related to each other.

Veiled by the fogs of imagination are many interesting facts concerning kings and chiefs which have been passed over untouched—such as the voyages of the vikings of the Pacific, who left names and legends around the islands. For instance, Hilo, in the island of Hawaii, is named after Whiro, a noted viking who sailed through many island groups with his brother, Punga, after whom the district of Puna is named. Ka-kuhi-hewa, ruler of Oahu, was the King Arthur of the Hawaiians, with a band of noted chiefs around his poi-bowl. Umi was a remarkable king of the island Hawaii. Many individual incidents of these persons are yet to be related.

The Hawaiian language papers since 1835, Fornander's Polynesian Researches, and many of the old Hawaiians have been of great assistance in searching for these "fragments of Hawaiian history," now set forth in this book.

W.D. W. [8]

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PRONUNCIATION

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In reading Hawaiian words do not end a syllable with a consonant, and pronounce all vowels as if they were Italian or French.

a = a in father.

e = e in they.

i = i in pin.

o = o in hold.

u = oo in spoon.

This is a fairly good rule for the pronunciation of all Polynesian words. [9]

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I

MAUI THE POLYNESIAN

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Among the really ancient ancestors of the Hawaiian chiefs, Maui is one of the most interesting. His name is found in different places in the high chief genealogy. He belonged to the mist land of time. He was one of the Polynesian demi-gods. He was possessed of supernatural power and made use of all manner of enchantments. In New Zealand antiquity he was said to have aided other gods in the creation of man.

Nevertheless he was very human. He lived in thatched houses, had wives and children, and was scolded by the women for not properly supporting his family. Yet he continually worked for the good of men. His mischievous pranks would make him another Mercury living in any age before the beginning of the Christian era.

When Maui was born his mother, not caring for him, cut off a lock of her hair, tied it around him and cast him into the sea. In this way the name came to him, Maui-Tiki-Tiki, "Maui formed in the topknot."

The waters bore him safely. Jellyfish enwrapped him and mothered him. The god of the [14]seas

protected him. He was carried to the god's house and hung up in the roof that he might feel the warm air of the fire and be cherished into life.

When he was old enough he came to his relations while they were at home, dancing and making merry. Little Maui crept in and sat down behind his brothers. His mother called the children and found a strange child, who soon proved that he was her son. Some of the brothers were jealous, but the eldest addressed the others as follows:

“Never mind; let him be our dear brother. In the days of peace remember the proverb, ‘When you are on friendly terms, settle your disputes in a friendly way; when you are at war, you must redress your injuries by violence.’ It is better for us, brothers, to be kind to other people. These are the ways by which men gain influence—by labouring for abundance of food to feed others, by collecting property to give to others, and by similar means by which you promote the good of others.”

Thus, according to the New Zealand story related by Sir George Grey, Maui was received in his home.

Maui's home in Hawaii was for a long time enveloped in darkness. According to some legends the skies pressed so closely and so heavily upon the earth that when the plants began to grow all the leaves were necessarily flat. According to other legends the plants had to push up the clouds a little, and thus the leaves flattened out into larger [15]surface, so that they could better drive the skies

back. Thus the leaves became flat and have so remained through all the days of mankind. The plants lifted the sky inch by inch until men were able to crawl about between the heavens and the earth, thus passing from place to place and visiting one another. After a long time Maui came to a woman and said: "Give me a drink from your gourd calabash and I will push the heavens higher." The woman handed the gourd to him. When he had taken a deep draught he braced himself against the clouds and lifted them to the height of the trees. Again he hoisted the sky and carried it to the tops of the mountains; then, with great exertion, he thrust it up to the place it now occupies. Nevertheless, dark clouds many times hang low along the great mountains and descend in heavy rains, but they dare not stay, lest Maui, the strong, come and hurl them so far away that they cannot come back again.

The Manahiki Islanders say that Maui desired to separate the sky from the earth. His father, Ru, was the supporter of the heavens. Maui persuaded him to assist in lifting the burden. They crowded it and bent it upward. They were able to stand with the sky resting on their shoulders. They heaved against the bending mass and it receded rapidly. They quickly put the palms of their hands under it, then the tips of their fingers, and it retreated farther and farther. At last, drawing [16]themselves out to gigantic proportions, they pushed the entire heavens up to

the very lofty position which they have ever since occupied.

On the island Hawaii, in a cave under a waterfall, dwelt Hina-of-the-fire, the mother of Maui.

From this home Maui crossed to the island Maui, climbed a great mountain, threw ropes made from fibres of plants around the sun's legs, pulled off many and then compelled the swift traveller of the heavens to go slowly on its way that men might have longer and better days.

Maui's home, at the best, was only a sorry affair. Gods and demi-gods lived in caves and small grass houses. The thatch rapidly rotted and required continual renewal. In a very short time the heavy rains beat through the decaying roof. The home was without windows or doors, save as low openings in the ends or sides allowed entrance to those willing to crawl through. Here Maui lived on edible roots and fruits and raw fish, knowing little about cooked food, for the art of fire-making was not yet known.

By and by Maui learned to make fire by rubbing sticks together.

A family of mud hens, worshipped by some of the Hawaiians in later years, understood the art of fire-making.

From the sea Maui and his brothers saw fire burning on a mountain side but it was always put entirely out when they hastened to the spot. [17]

Maui proposed to his brothers that they go fishing, leaving him to watch the birds. But the Alae counted

the fishermen and refused to build a fire for the hidden one who was watching them. They said among themselves, “There are three in the boat and we know not where the other one is, we will make no fire to-day.”

So the experiment failed again and again. If one or two remained or if all waited on the land there would be no fire—but the dawn which saw the four brothers in the boat, saw also the fire on the land.

Finally Maui rolled some kapa cloth together and stuck it up in one end of the canoe so that it would look like a man. He then concealed himself near the haunt of the mud-hens, while his brothers went out fishing. The birds counted the figures in the boat and then started to build a heap of wood for the fire.

Maui was impatient—and just as an old bird began to select sticks with which to make the flames he leaped swiftly out and caught her and held her prisoner. He forgot for a moment that he wanted the secret of fire-making. In his anger against the wise bird his first impulse was to taunt her and then kill her for hiding the secret of fire.

But the bird cried out: “If you are the death of me —my secret will perish also—and you cannot have fire.” [18]

Maui then promised to spare her life if she would tell him what to do.

Then came a contest of wits. The bird told the demi-god to rub the stalks of water plants together. He guarded the bird and tried the plants. Then she

told him to rub reeds together—but they bent and broke and he could make no fire. He twisted her neck until she was half dead—then she cried out: “I have hidden the fire in a green stick.”

Maui worked hard but not a spark of fire appeared. Again he caught his prisoner by the head and wrung her neck, and she named a kind of dry wood. Maui rubbed the sticks together but they only became warm. The twisting process was resumed—and repeated until the mud-hen was almost dead—and Maui had tried tree after tree. At last Maui found fire. Then as the flames rose he said: “There is one more thing to rub.” He took a fire stick and rubbed the top of the head of his prisoner until the feathers fell off and the raw flesh appeared. Thus the Hawaiian mud-hen and her descendants have ever since had bald heads, and the Hawaiians have had the secret of fire-making.

Maui was a great discoverer of islands. Among other groups he “fished up from the ocean” New Zealand and the Hawaiian Islands with a magic hook. One by one he pulled them to himself out of the deep waters. He discovered them.

Thus Maui raised the sky, lassoed the sun, found fire and made the earth habitable for man. [19]

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MAUI SEEKING IMMORTALITY

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The story of Maui seeking immortality for the human race is one of the finest myths in the world. For pure imagination and pathos it is difficult to find any tale from Grecian or Latin literature to compare with it. In Greek and Roman fables gods suffered for other gods, and yet none were surrounded with such absolutely mythical experiences as those through which the demi-god Maui of the Pacific ocean passed when he entered the gates of death with the hope of winning immortality for mankind. The really remarkable group of legends which cluster around Maui is well concluded by the story of his unselfish and heroic battle with death.

The different islands of the Pacific have their hades, or abode of the dead. Sometimes the tunnels left by currents of melted lava running toward the west are the passages into the home of departed spirits. In Samoa there are two circular holes among the rocks at the west end of the island Savaii. These are the entrances to the underworld for chiefs and people. The spirits of those [20]who die on the other islands leap into the sea and swim around the land

from island to island until they reach Savaii. Then they plunge down into their heaven or their hades.

There is no escape from death. The natives of New Zealand say: "Man may have descendants but the daughters of the night strangle his offspring"; and again: "Men make heroes, but death carries them away."

Maui once said to the goddess of the moon: "Let death be short. As the moon dies and returns with new strength, so let men die and revive again."

But she replied: "Let death be very long, that man may sigh and sorrow. When man dies let him go into darkness, become like earth, that those he leaves behind may weep and wail and mourn."

"Maui did not wish men to die but to live forever. Death appeared degrading and an insult to the dignity of man. Man ought to die like the moon which dips in the life-giving waters of Kane and is renewed again, or like the sun, which daily sinks into the pit of night and with renewed strength rises in the morning."

The Hawaiian legends say that Maui was slain in a conflict with some of the gods. The New Zealand legends give a more detailed account of his death.

Maui sought the home of Hine-nui-te-po—the guardian of life. He heard her order her attendants, the brightest flashes of lightning, to watch for [21]any one approaching and capture all who came walking upright as a man. He crept past the attendants on hands and feet, found the place of life,

stole some of the food of the goddess and returned home. He showed the food to his brothers and friends and persuaded them to go with him into the darkness of the night of death. On the way he changed them into the form of birds. In the evening they came to the house of the goddess on an island long before fished up from the seas.

Maui warned the birds to refrain from making any noise while he made the supreme effort of his life. He was about to enter upon his struggle for immortality. He said to the birds: "If I go into the stomach of this woman do not laugh until I have gone through her, and come out again at her mouth; then you can laugh at me."

His friends said: "You will be killed." Maui replied: "If you laugh at me when I have only entered her stomach I shall be killed, but if I have passed through her and come out of her mouth I shall escape and Hine-nui-te-po will die."

His friends called out to him: "Go then. The decision is with you."

Hine was sleeping soundly. The sunlight had almost passed away and the house lay in quiet gloom. Maui came near to the sleeping goddess. Her large fishlike mouth was open wide. He put off his clothing and prepared to pass through the ordeal of going to the hidden source of life, tear it [22]out of the body of its guardian and carry it back with him to mankind. He stood in all the glory of savage manhood. His body was splendidly marked by the

tattoo-bones, and now well oiled shone and sparkled in the last rays of the setting sun.

He leaped through the mouth of the enchanted one and entered her stomach, weapon in hand, to take out her heart, the vital principle which he knew had its home somewhere within her being. He found immortality on the other side of death. He turned to come back again into life when suddenly a little bird laughed in a clear, shrill tone and Great Hine, through whose mouth Maui was passing, awoke. Her sharp, obsidian teeth closed with a snap upon Maui, cutting his body in the centre. Thus Maui entered the gates of death, but was unable to return, and death has ever since been victor over rebellious men. The natives have the saying:

“If Maui had not died he could have restored to life all who had gone before him, and thus succeeded in destroying death.”

Maui’s brothers took the dismembered body and buried it in a cave called Te-ana-i-hana. “The cave dug out,” possibly a prepared burial place.

Maui’s wife made war upon the gods, and killed as many as she could to avenge her husband’s death. One of the old native poets of New Zealand in chanting the story to Mr. White said: “But though Maui was killed his offspring survived. Some of these are at Hawa-i-ki (Hawaii) and [23]some at Ao-tea-roa (New Zealand) but the greater part of them remained at Hawaiki. This history was handed down by the generations of our ancestors of ancient times, and

we continue to rehearse it to our children, with our incantations and genealogies, and all other matters relating to our race.”

**“But death is nothing new
Death is, and has been ever since old Maui died
Then Pata-tai laughed loud
And woke the goblin-god
Who severed him in two, and shut him in,
So dusk of eve came on.”
—*Maori Death Chant*. [24]**

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II

THE WATER OF LIFE¹

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“The Self-reliant Dragon” is frequently mentioned in the oldest Hawaiian legends. This dragon was probably a very old crocodile worshipped as the ancestor goddess of the Hawaiian chief families.

She dwelt in one of the mysterious islands mentioned in the Hawaiian chants as Kua-i-Helani, “the Far-away Helani,” lying in the ancient far western home of the Polynesians.

Iku was the chief. He had several sons. The youngest was Aukele-nui-a-Iku, Aukele the Great Son of Iku.

Aukele was a favorite of the Self-reliant Dragon. She gave him a large bamboo stick. Inside she placed an image of the god Lono, and also a magic leaf which could provide plenty of food for any one who touched the leaf to his lips. She put in a part of her own skin.

She said, “This skin is a cloak for you. If you lift it up against any enemies, they will fall to pieces as dust and ashes.” [25]

They put all these treasures in the bamboo stick. Then the dragon taught the boy all kinds of magic

power.

The brothers, who were great warriors, determined to sail away, find a new land and conquer it by fighting. Aukele persuaded them to take him. Then he sent one to get the stick he had brought from the dragon pit which was near the sea.

After a long time on the sea all their food was gone and they were starving and lying in the bottom of the boat. Aukele fed them from the leaf which he touched to their lips.

Some days passed and Aukele said, "To-morrow we will come to a land where a woman is the ruler. Let me tell why we journey."

They said, "Did you build this boat, and have you its chant?"

He said: "We must not call this a boat for war, but of discovery, to find new land."

The chiefess of that land looked out and saw a boat in the ocean, and sent some birds to see what the boat was doing and learn whether it was a war canoe, or a travelling boat. The birds went out, and Aukele wanted his brothers to say it was a travelling boat. The birds asked and the brothers said: "This is a war canoe." The birds went away. Aukele took up the bamboo stick and threw it in the sea, and leaped in after it. The brothers threw the cloak of Aukele on the beach. The [26]chiefess found the cloak and shook it toward the boat, then threw it away. The brothers broke into small dust and were destroyed.

The boat and the brothers sank to the bottom of the sea.

Aukele swam to the beach, pulled up his stick, found his cloak and lay down under a tree and slept. A watchdog came out, and smelled the man, and barked.

The chiefess called two women, and told them to see who it was, and if they found any one, kill him. They came down and the god of Aukele awakened him, and told him the names of the women.

The women came and he greeted them. They were ashamed because he had found their names, and one said to the other, "What can we give him for naming us?" The other said, "We will let him be the husband of our ruler." So they came and sat down by him, and they talked lovingly together and he won their hearts.

The women told him that they had been sent to kill him, but that they would say they did not find him; then other messengers would be sent. They went home and told the chiefess: "We went to the precipice; there was no one there. Then to the forest and the sea. There was no one there. Perhaps the dog made a mistake."

The chiefess turned the dog out again; at once there was more barking. She told her bird brothers to go and look over the land. Lono saw them [27]and said; "Here is another death day for us. I will tell you who these birds are. When they come you say their names quickly and welcome them." So he did. They

wondered how he knew their names. This knowledge gave him power over them and they could not harm him. The birds also thought they would have to offer their ruler as a wife to this wonderful stranger. They went back to their sister and told her they had found a husband for her. This pleased her. She sent them after Aukele. He told them he would go by and by.

Lono said to Aukele, "Death has partly passed, but more trouble lies before us. When you go up do not sit down or enter the house. Stand at the door. First these two women will come. If they say 'Aloha' it is all right. The dog will come and will try to kill you. When he has passed by, the brothers will come. The food they make and put in old calabashes, do not eat. See if the calabash has anything growing in its cracks. You will find new calabashes scattered over the ground. Food and fish and water are inside. Eat from these."

He made ready to go, and went up to the house, and stood by the door. The two women said "Aloha" and called to him to come in, but he would not enter. The dog ran out, opened her mouth and tried to bite Aukele through the magic cloak. The dog became ashes. The chiefess saw the dog was [28]dead and was very sorry because he was the watchman for her land.

The brothers came to him with food which they had put in moss-covered calabashes. He never touched it. It was the death food. He went to a place where green calabash vines were growing, took a

calabash, shook it, broke it, opened it and found good food inside.

Then they lived as man and wife. The chiefess had been a cannibal but at this time stopped eating men. Soon a son was born.

After a time the bird brothers taught Aukele how to leap into the air and fly as a bird.

The chiefess told her brothers to go away into the heavens and find her father, Ku-waha-ilo, a cannibal god. He was also the father of Pele, the goddess of volcanic fire. They must tell him that she had given all her treasures to her husband—stars, lands, and seas. She told them to take her husband to see the father.

They flew away, Aukele flying faster than the others. The father saw him and thought his daughter was dead. He said, “She is the watchman for my land, and no man could come here if she were alive,” and he was angry.

Lono told Aukele to put on his magic cloak that now covered him from head to foot. Then he understood there must be a battle. The cannibal father made fire, called Kuku-ena (the lightning); then Ikuwa, a stone crashing like thunder. [29]The lightning and the crashing stone were struck by the cloak and rattled into ashes, cracking and breaking, reverberating, sounding like a drum.

The bird brothers saw the fire and heard the thunder. They were far behind Aukele. They saw the lightning and the thunder defeated. After the battle,