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# HAWAIIAN FOLKLORE

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# FOLKLORE

- Hawaii was a highly isolated land and remained in a relative stone age, paganistic culture until the overthrow and these cultural elements remain relevant today. Thus, the cultural background that explains superstitions is less outdated because of the abrupt shift in pre to post-contact culture. This also makes many of the folklore genres intertwined, like superstitions based directly on legends and myths like some of the ones we collected.
- 5 superstitions
- 3 traditions

# Superstition: Mo'o wahine (lizard woman)

- 1) Leave an offering on the goddess's sacred rock to bring rain to the town
- 2) Before entering her pond, place a Ti leaf on the water; if it floats, it's safe to swim, and if it sinks she will drown you

-Context: The goddess lives in the water, and was believed to control or influence the elements in the town of Waimea. Leaving an offering to her is associated with bringing rain for crops. It was also part of paying respects to her which also included testing the pond with a Ti leaf because the pond is her home.



# Superstition: Night Marchers

- Ghosts of Hawaiian warriors
- Don't whistle at night
- Careful not to make eye contact
- They can be identified chanting, drumming, or marching in old battle fields or sacred hawaiian sites.
- Armed with swords, spears and maces
- Z-Trails
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# Superstitions: Lehua Blossom L



- Red flower indigenous to Hawaii
- In Hawaiian legend, where Ohia and Lehua were both young lovers. Pele, the goddess of volcanoes/lava wanted Ohia for herself but he refused
- She turned Ohia into a tree and Lehua in to the beautiful red flower out of anger and detail
- As long as the flowers stay on the tree it will be a beautiful sunny day but as soon as the flowers are picked, it will begin to rain as Lehua can stand to be away from her lover.



# Superstitions: Never Bring Bananas on a boat

- Taking bananas on a boat is bad luck
- Hawaiian fisherman claim that bringing bananas on their boats will cause fish not to bite
  - Mechanical breakdowns
- Explanation:
  - “Early anglers in Hawaii would embark upon lengthy fishing trips in dugout canoes provisioned with (along with other food items) bananas. The farther they went, the fewer the fish, causing some of them to mistake correlation for causation”



# Superstition: Pele - Pork on the Pali



- You can't take pork on the Pali
  - (the cliffs that connect Kihei to Lahaina)
- Pele
  - Hawaiian fire goddess of volcanos
  - Pele had a relationship with demi god that was part pig
    - Kamapua'a ("hog child")
    - Bad break up
    - She is insulted by those who take pork to this area
    - If caught, one must feed pork to Pele's dog



# Superstitions: Lava Rocks and Pele



If you take lava rocks from a volcano, you will have bad luck because the rocks are cursed by the fire goddess, Pele, until they are returned.

If you see an older hawaiian lady walking the streets, it may be Pele, because it is said she shape-shifts into an old woman, so whenever you see an old Hawaiian women, you are supposed to offer her food or drinks so that you will receive good luck.





# Tradition: Lei

- The act of lei (flower necklace) giving is a way that people adorn others for congratulations or aloha (love)
- Lei are given on birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, graduations and other significant events or achievements
- It is considered rude to refuse a lei
- Pregnant women have to have an open lei that hangs at the sides



## Tradition : The Haka

- A branch of an ancient dancing tradition that stems from the collective Polynesian islands and cultures
- Performed primarily before battle to intimidate opponents. Can also be done before weddings and funerals. It is seen as a farewell and greeting dance at times
- Dance varies across cultures but has the same basic elements of War or Death, Sun or Warmth, and Life or Living
- Identifiable by bent knees, heavy use of facial expressions and strong, aggressive movements
- In New Zealand it goes by the Haka to the Maori people, in Samoa it is referred to as the Manu Siva Tau and in Hawaii it is called the Ha'a



# Conclusion/Questions

The cultural and social context for the collected folklore show a strong blend of old and modern times as many people still believe in the Hawaiian myths, legends, and magic that are the background for most of the folklore here. Ancient practices of leaving offerings or doing chants and hula happen alongside daily tasks like buying groceries and are a part of normal, everyday life on the islands.

Mahalo nui loa!