Chapter One

"Ka Hoki te Manu" - Origin Stories

"Ka hoki te Manu - The Bird Returns"

Ka hoki te manu ki te Kohanga
Ka hoki te iwi ki te Kainga tupu
Ka hoki te mana ki te puna o te ora

The bird returns to its nest
The people to their home
The mana to the fountain of life
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A Good Place to Start: The Beginning

In the beginning the Sky Father and the Earth Mother were cleaved together in an embrace so deep, they were joined by sinews. Between the great primeval parents and in a state of perpetual darkness, lived their children. From time to time these children would catch glimpses of light shining between their parents' limbs and as they grew tired of the darkness, five of them, all sons who became revered as Gods by many Pacific societies, plotted to separate their parents. Tu, the God of Man and War suggested that they should kill both parents but the others considered this far too harsh. Several attempts, including hacking at the sinews, failed. Finally, Tane, God of the forests, lay on his mother's breasts and with his legs, pushed his father upwards until the sinews snapped. The Sky Father drifted into the heavens and light entered the world. It is said that the red sky at sunset is the blood that was shed when the sinews snapped and red ochre is said to have come from blood that flowed from the hacking of the sinews. The color red has come to signify both sacredness and prosperity. It is also said that the falling rain is an expression of love from the Sky Father to his beloved and when the mists rise from the Earth to the Heavens, it is the Earth Mother returning that love.

This new world of light revealed to the sons the many other descendants of their parents: mountains, rivers, lakes, trees, and rocks. All of nature was their kin but there were no humans and it was only after an exhaustive search through all of nature that they found the elements necessary to create the first human. She was female and her name was Hine-Ahuone, the maiden who was formed from the earth. She and one of the God-Sons, Tane, were the parents of all humans.

Many societies throughout the world believed that their rulers were descended from Gods. In many Pacific Islander societies it is believed that all human beings are descended from Gods through the loins of Hine-Ahuone and the God Tane. Some Maori iwi (tribes) say that Hine-Ahu-One was a goddess in her own right, that she was borne from the loins of her Earth-Mother even before the parents were separated.

Many of our stories, especially our origin stories often provide an insight to our values, beliefs and ways in which knowledge is passed on. For example, when the Sky Father and the Earth Mother were separated, the God Tane lay on his mother's breast. It was from his mother that he derived his strength. Also the Earth Mother stayed with her children while the Sky Father drifted up into the heavens. In some Pacific Islander societies, strength and nourishment comes from the mother and when a mother has to choose between her husband and her children,
children and their survival takes precedence.

This origin story also suggests how we should interact with the environments in which we live. The Earth is our mother and all natural phenomena are our kin and they are living beings imbued with the essence of life. Surely we should treat them as such. Powerful and vivid metaphors help us to remember our stories and affect how we see and interpret the world.

**Origin Story from Tonga (contributed by Tevita Ka'ili)**

In the ancient times, the God Tangaloa Tufunga instructed the God Tangaloa 'Atulongolongo to return to the earth and check the *fue* (creep) plant that grew on the Reef of 'Ata. Tangaloa 'Atulongolongo transformed into a *kiu* (plover) and descended to the earth to visit the Reef of 'Ata. When Tangaloa 'Atulongolongo arrived at the Reef of 'Ata he found that the *fue* plant was decaying and it was breeding a worm. Tangaloa 'Atulongolongo pecked at the worm and divided it into three separate parts. Out of the three parts grew out three personages named Kohai, Koau, and Momo. These were the first three original human beings. All Tongans are descendants of these three human beings.

**A Story from Palau (from Never and Always)**

It is said that the islands of Anguar and Peleliu, now separated by five miles of water, were once one land mass. Here there lived a man named Uab who from childhood, was kept separate from other children and who continually consumed huge amounts of food. When he became an adult, his appetite became even more voracious to the extent the other people were starving. So it was that his neighbors decided that, rather than starve to death, they had to burn this giant. They built a large fire that encircled Uab. As the fire raged, Uab fell over and in doing so he kicked Peleliu away from Anguar and the parts of his body that remained above the water became islands. For example, his legs became Koror, known to have the most activity, his stomach became Ngiwai, known for plentiful food crops, and his head became Ngerchelong, known for intelligent people.
"Aia a la o Pele i Hawaii - Pele is alive and lives in Hawaii"
(Pele, Hawaiian Goddess of the Volcano)

Aia a ola o Pele i Hawaii (Pele is alive and lives in Hawaii)

Perhaps the most powerful and revered deity in Hawaii is the Fire Goddess Pele. Pele and her family is said to have migrated from the central Pacific, possibly Tahiti, on a floating island, to the Hawaiian Islands and Pele took up residence at Hale Ma'u Ma'u cauldron in the Kilauea crater on the Big Island of Hawaii. Many hulas are danced and stories retold in honor of Pele, a fair and fiery personage with hair the color of flame - a fair and beautiful red-haired woman. Pele continues to capture the imagination, but to many Hawaiians, Pele is still very much alive, sometimes showing herself as a beautiful redheaded woman or an elderly lady who is seen walking along the highways near Kilauea National Park. The world famous explosions at Kilauea and the lava flows on Hawaii are evidence enough for many Hawaiians that Pele is alive and well in Hawaii.

Maui

The Demi-god Maui finds his way into many Pacific Stories. Some stories say Maui's mother miscarried him. She wrapped his fetus in her hair and threw it into the ocean. Denizens of the deep took pity on the fetus and cared for it until it grew to full term.
When Maui grew to childhood he returned to his family and took on the role of trickster. His many exploits are famous. Maui is said to have brought fire into the world by tricking his ancestress Mahuika who was the Goddess of fire. Maui is also said to have captured the sun. The old stories say that in Maui's time, the sun would speed swiftly across the sky so that people did not have time to do their daytime chores. Maui knew that the sun rose each morning from a cave and so he fashioned a net which he put across the mouth of this cave. When the sun rose the next morning, it became ensnared in the net and Maui beat it with a club until it promised to travel more slowly across the sky. However, Maui is most famous as a "fisher of islands." Maui is said to have been in possession of a powerful fishhook that had been fashioned from his grandmother's jawbone. On several occasions he cast this hook to sea and pulled up islands. Maui is therefore credited with discovering many islands of the Pacific.
People of the Sea

("Ocean Saga")

(The) singular spectacle of a people so widely scattered, yet so homogenous in its physical characteristics, in its language and customs, has not failed to exercise the minds of many learned and worthy men, both of the past and present time, who have written much and differ widely about the origin of the Polynesian family.

(Fornander, 1969, pg 1.)

Some stories say that the Sky Father had two wives: the Earth Mother and the Ocean Maid. Pacific Islanders could justifiably claim connections to both. Just as they are children of the Earth Mother by virtue of their genealogies, they are surely children of the Ocean Maid by virtue of their experiences and abilities. Long before Magellan and Columbus began their voyages of exploration, Pacific Islander ancestors were traversing the Pacific in faster and more seafaring vessels. According to traditions, Pacific Islanders' ocean canoes, either twin-hulled or single-hulled with outriggers, were fastest and most superior ocean vessels of their time and Pacific Islanders were just as at home on the ocean as they were on land. Many of these canoes
were up to 100 feet long and did not have stationary masts. This allowed Pacific Islanders to sail against the wind. In fact, Pacific Islanders invented tacking against the wind.

To settle the expanse of the Pacific was still not an easy task. Nevertheless, the Pacific Islander people discovered and settled almost every inhabitable island. Where they came from, however, is still the subject of debate.

While some researchers believe that about 3,500 to 4,000 years ago, people with agricultural and sea technologies entered the Pacific (Bellwood, 1993), many others tend to favor the theory that the ancestors of the Polynesians migrated into the Pacific from Asia Minor via the Malay Peninsula (Best, 1934; Churchill, 1922.). Smith (1987) claims that by about 450 B.C. Polynesian ancestors were in India and their staple food was rice. Fornander (1969) believes that Hindustanis expelled these Polynesian ancestors who then moved into the Malay Peninsula before beginning their oceanic migration through Indonesia, the Celebes, Melanesia, and finally into Polynesia. The pattern of settlement is supposed to have taken the Polynesian ancestors through Fiji in 450 A.D.; Samoa and Tonga in 600 A.D (although some believe that Austronesian speakers of the Lapita traditions were in Samoa 3000 years ago); Hawaii and Marquesas by 650 A.D.; and Tahiti by 850 A.D., and Aotearoa-New Zealand by 1000 A.D. (Smith, 1987).

The archaeological record places the ancestors of the Polynesians in Southeast Asia more than 4500 years ago with possible movement through the Philippines, Micronesia, and into Polynesia or through Indonesia into New Guinea by 3,500 years ago and into Polynesia by about 1140 B.C (Shutler and Shutler, 1975).

Another theory, proposed by Thor Heyerdahl, states that the ancestors of the Polynesians came from the Americas and landed in Eastern Polynesia. The sweet potato, a Polynesian staple has its origins in the highland of Peru and was cultivated in Hawaii by 1250 A.D. Maori scholar Sir Apirana Ngata (1928) cites traditional chants that talk about the Maori *kumara* (sweet potato) being brought from around the shores of Lake Titicaca. Hohepa Te Rake, a lesser known scholar who was a contemporary of Ngata, believes that the ancestors of the Maori came from what is now Iraq and Iran. These ancestors crossed the Caucasus Mountains and migrated through Southern Europe until they got to Portugal where they built ships and crossed the Atlantic landing in Central America. They moved down to Peru and decided to migrate into the Pacific. Landing first at the Easter Islands they then moved on to Tahiti where they split up. Some went to Hawaii, others to Aotearoa-New Zealand, and others continued on to Tonga and Samoa. As they moved westward they encountered another race of people who were thought to have come from the west.
To date, there is still debate over the origins of Pacific peoples and when they entered and settled the Pacific.

The Hawai`i Traditions

Throughout much of the Pacific, especially in Polynesia (with the exception of Tonga), stories abound of the legendary homeland. Interchangeably called Hawai`i, Ha`ai, Savai`i, Tahiti, Tawhitinui, and Kahiki, its location seems to be shrouded in the mists of time. Our traditions speak of Ha`awinoi (Hawai`i the great), Ha`awiroa (Hawai`i the long), Ha`awikapamama (Hawai`i the distant), te Hononga Wairua (Hawai`i at the joining of the two waters). We are not certain where these Hawai`i's are located but interesting facts and beliefs interchangeably exist. These are some Hawai`i's that we do know about. There is the Hawaiian Islands, said in some traditions to be named after Hawai`i Loa, its first human settler. There is Tahiti, in French Polynesia. There is Savai`i, in Samoa. It seems as if Polynesian ancestors named many of the islands that they settled Hawai`i. There is one other Hawai`i worthy of mention. Hawaiian traditions remember it as Kahikihanakapi`ialunakaiwikuamo`o-oke, Hawai`i – our homeland where our ancestors walked along the backbone of Heaven. Some Pacific Islander historians say that this is the name for the Americas and that the continuous mountain range that extends from Alaska to the Andes in South America, of which the Rocky Mountains are a part, is the backbone of heaven. A modern Maori chant says:

 Tu ake ana hau i te Taumarumaru o Nga maunga,
 Maunga tupaia............
 Ka hoki te manu ki te kohanga
 Ka hoki te iwi ki te Kaitinga tpu
 Ka hoki te mana ki te puna o te ora

Here I stand in the shadow
of our ancestral mountains.............
The bird returns to its nest
The people return to their original homeland
The mana returns to the fountain of life.

For some of us, moving to Mainland U.S.A. is returning to Hawai`i, our legendary homeland, like a bird returning to its nest.

It is more than likely that today's Pacific people are the descendants of early explorers and travelers that moved into the Pacific from both the east and west. However we also carry the blood of colonizing nations of the west and the migrating nations of the east.
Suggested Activities:
1. Map out the possible movements of Pacific Islander Ancestors into the Pacific and through the Pacific. Include possible dates.

Reflective Activities:
1. What are some creation or origin stories that your parents, grandparents, or other relatives know?

2. What are some stories that your parents, grandparents, or other relatives tell?

3. What other origin stories do you know?

4. What do these stories tell about beliefs? Your beliefs? Other's beliefs?