

horizon was the fire of Mahuika and that flames glowed at her finger-tips and toes. Maui set out to visit her, determined to outwit her. In response to Maui's request that he should be given a particle of her magic fires, the goddess plucked off the end of one of her big toes, which contained the fire, and gave it to him. Pretending to return to his home with the fire, Maui instead threw it in a nearby stream, where it was extinguished. He returned to Mahuika and begged her to replace the lost flame, which she did. Maui repeated the trick several times. Only when she had given him the fiery nails of all her fingers and toes except one did Mahuika realise that Maui was deceiving her, and in her anger she plucked off the remaining finger-nail and threw it at him with a curse for the destruction not only of her tormentor, but also of the earth and the forest. Desperately Maui ran from the flames, but he seemed to be trapped and in his extremity he called upon his ancestral gods for succour. To his delight rain came from the skies and quelled the fires—even though in saving Maui the Great Rain flooded the earth.

Legend says that when the flames were extinguished the seeds of fire were retained in a number of trees, notably the *kaikomako* (the timber with which the Maoris secured fire by friction), the *hinahina*, the *patete* and the *totara*. The story of Maui and the fire deity is preserved in the expression, "Te Ahi-a-Mahuika", which occurs frequently in ancient poems. It really means volcanic fires, and the legend probably refers to Maui's visit to some great active volcano and the peril in which he found himself from an outburst of lava.

Maui's jawbone "secret weapon" figures in the legend of the demi-god's "fishing-up" of islands, including New Zealand, from the ocean—the jawbone was his hook. According to Ngai-

Tahu genealogy, Maui discovered New Zealand some fifty generations ago, arriving in a canoe called *Nukutahemeha* in the North Island and *Maahunui* in the South Island. The Maoris on the east coast of the North Island say that the canoe may be seen in a petrified form on the summit of Hikurangi mountain. The South Island version is that their island itself was Maui's canoe (*Te Waka-a-Maui*) and that he stood in the canoe while drawing up the North Island (*Te Ika-roa-a-Maui*).

A man of many parts was Maui. Not only was he responsible for many supernatural acts, but he is also credited with such mundane inventions as the barb for the fishing hook and the cunning arrangement of the eel-



The legends of Maui are handed down from generation to generation

basket in which the doubled-over centre-piece prevents the fish from getting out again. In his name, also, stands the *kumara* planting chant—the "Tewha-a-Maui"—which, according to tradition, he first sang while in the guise of a bird. The song has been handed down by word of mouth to this day.