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MAUI ISLANDS
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MENEHUNE: Real or Myth?



The folklore of many nations around the world include stories of magical little people. The most famous are the Leprechauns of Ireland. In Hawai'i, the mythology of the *Menehune* is as old as the beginnings of Polynesian history. When the first Polynesians arrived in Hawaii, they found dams, fish-ponds, and even *heiau* (temples), all presumably built by the *Menehune* who were already there, living in the forests and caves. While archaeologists have never found remains of a distinctively small race of ancient people in Hawai'i, many think the *Menehune* legend may well have a basis in fact. In 2003, a species of dwarf human was discovered on the Indonesian island of Flores. *Homo floresiensis* was only about 1 meter in height and fully bipedal. The skull has human-like teeth with a receding forehead and no chin. *H. floresiensis* fossils have been discovered from 38,000 to 18,000 years ago, though archeological evidence suggests it lived on Flores between at least 95,000 and 13,000 years ago. It used stone tools and fire, and hunted pygmy elephants, Komodo dragons, and the giant rats found on Flores. Its discoverers believe that *h. floresiensis* is a dwarf form of *Homo erectus* - it is not uncommon for dwarf forms of large mammals to evolve on islands. Modern humans arrived on Flores between 55,000 and 35,000 years ago, and presumably interacted with *h. floresiensis*.

Indonesian folklore tells of small, inarticulate creatures called *Ebu Gogo* which sounds remarkably suggestive of *h. floresiensis*, but could easily be coincidence—if *h. floresiensis* had been found in Ireland, we'd possibly be wondering if they were Leprechauns.

Everyone
that lives
in Hawaii
knows the
Menehune
had magical
powers and
created great
deeds.

~ *The Three
Menehune
of Ainahou (Maui)*
By 'Uncle Charlie'
Charles Kauluwehi
Maxwell Sr.

[www.moolelo.com/
menehune.html](http://www.moolelo.com/menehune.html)



FOCUS MAUI NUI is a community-driven vision for the future of our islands, spearheaded by Maui Economic Development Board, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the economic well-being of Maui County. VISIT www.FocusMauiNui.com or CALL 808.270.6801