

what language is in moana

****What Language Is in Moana? Exploring the Polynesian Tongue Behind the Film****

what language is in moana is a question that many curious fans and linguistics enthusiasts ask after watching Disney's vibrant and culturally rich animated film. Moana, released in 2016, is not just a beautiful story of adventure and self-discovery; it's also a celebration of Polynesian culture and heritage. One of the most fascinating aspects of the film is its use of language, which helps immerse viewers in the authentic world of the South Pacific. So, let's dive into the linguistic roots of Moana and uncover what language is spoken in the film, as well as the cultural significance behind it.

The Polynesian Language in Moana: An Overview

When you watch Moana, you might notice that the characters occasionally speak words or phrases that don't sound like English or any widely spoken language. This is because the filmmakers wanted to pay homage to the real languages spoken by the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Islands. The primary language featured in Moana is ****Māori****, along with influences from other Polynesian languages such as ****Samoan****, ****Tahitian****, and ****Hawaiian****.

Māori, the language of the indigenous people of New Zealand, plays a significant role in the film's dialogue and songs. The filmmakers collaborated closely with cultural experts and linguists to ensure the language's accurate and respectful representation. This collaboration was essential to create a film that resonates authentically with Polynesian audiences and educates others about the rich linguistic heritage of the region.

Why Māori and Other Polynesian Languages?

The Polynesian triangle, stretching from Hawaii in the north to New Zealand in the southwest and Easter Island in the southeast, encompasses numerous island nations with closely related languages. Māori is part of the ****Eastern Polynesian language group****, which shares many similarities with other Polynesian tongues like Tahitian, Samoan, and Hawaiian. By incorporating these languages, Moana reflects the interconnectedness of Polynesian cultures while highlighting the diversity within the region.

Using primarily Māori also made sense because New Zealand's Māori culture is one of the most visible and well-documented Polynesian cultures today. It allowed the filmmakers to ground the story in a language that many Polynesians recognize, while also introducing non-Polynesian audiences to something new and beautiful.

Language Use in Moana: Songs and Dialogue

One of the most memorable features of Moana is its soundtrack, which includes songs sung partly or entirely in Polynesian languages. The music, crafted by Lin-Manuel Miranda, Opetaia Foa'i, and Mark Mancina, integrates authentic linguistic elements that bring the culture to life.

The Role of Language in the Film's Songs

Songs like "We Know the Way" and "Logo te Pate" include lyrics in Tokelauan and Tuvaluan, Polynesian languages closely related to Māori. These songs serve as a celebration of ocean voyaging and ancestral knowledge, crucial themes in Polynesian culture. Additionally, the use of these languages in the soundtrack helps preserve and popularize these often lesser-known tongues.

For example, "We Know the Way" features lyrics in Tokelauan, a language spoken in Tokelau, a group of atolls in the South Pacific. This inclusion connects deeply with the film's themes of navigation and exploration by indigenous people.

Dialogue: A Blend of English and Polynesian Phrases

While the majority of Moana's dialogue is in English to make it accessible to a global audience, the film enriches its storytelling by sprinkling in Polynesian words and phrases. These are used in contexts that highlight cultural concepts, names, and expressions that don't have direct English translations.

For instance, words like *"Maui"* (the demigod's name), *"Moana"* (meaning "ocean" or "sea" in many Polynesian languages), and *"Te Fiti"* (the island goddess) are integral to the story and evoke Polynesian mythology and spiritual beliefs. This blend of languages adds authenticity and a sense of place without overwhelming viewers unfamiliar with Polynesian tongues.

The Importance of Language Accuracy and Cultural Respect in Moana

Disney's Moana stands out because of its commitment to cultural authenticity and respect. The film's creators worked with the *"Oceanic Story Trust"*, a group of cultural experts, historians, and anthropologists from across Polynesia, to ensure that every aspect of the film—including language—was handled sensitively and accurately.

Consultation with Linguists and Cultural Experts

Linguists specializing in Māori and other Polynesian languages were consulted to help write and pronounce the words correctly. This attention to detail ensured that the language felt natural and true rather than a random assortment of exotic-sounding words. Voice actors from Polynesian backgrounds also contributed to the authentic pronunciation and delivery of lines.

This collaboration highlights how language can be used to honor and preserve indigenous cultures in mainstream media, rather than misrepresent or appropriate them.

Language as a Bridge to Understanding Polynesian Culture

The use of Polynesian languages in Moana does more than add flavor to the film—it educates audiences about the values, history, and worldview of Polynesian peoples. Language carries culture, and by integrating it into the narrative, Moana opens a door to learning about the importance of ocean navigation, respect for nature, and community bonds that are central to Polynesian life.

This approach has inspired many viewers, especially younger generations, to explore Polynesian languages and traditions themselves, contributing to a revival of interest and pride in indigenous heritage.

How to Learn More About the Language in Moana

If you've been captivated by the Polynesian languages in Moana and want to explore further, there are several ways to do so:

- **Online Language Resources:** Websites and apps offer introductions to Māori, Samoan, and Hawaiian languages, including basic vocabulary and pronunciation guides.
- **Community Classes and Workshops:** Many cultural centers and universities provide classes on Polynesian languages and culture.
- **Music and Media:** Listening to traditional and contemporary Polynesian music, or watching documentaries about Polynesian culture, can deepen your understanding.
- **Language Exchange:** Connecting with native speakers through language exchange programs or social networks can provide real-life practice and cultural insights.

Engaging with the language not only enhances appreciation of films like Moana but also

supports the preservation of these beautiful and vital languages.

The Broader Impact of Language in Animated Films Like Moana

Moana is part of a growing trend in animation and film to incorporate indigenous languages authentically. This trend helps counteract the historical marginalization of minority languages and promotes linguistic diversity in global media.

By featuring Polynesian languages, Moana challenges the dominance of English and invites viewers to celebrate linguistic variety. This shift encourages filmmakers to collaborate more with cultural experts, fostering mutual respect and richer storytelling.

In summary, the language in Moana is primarily rooted in Māori and other Polynesian languages, carefully woven into the fabric of the film to honor the culture it represents. This thoughtful integration of language elevates the film beyond entertainment, making it a meaningful cultural experience that resonates with audiences worldwide.

Frequently Asked Questions

What language is spoken in the movie Moana?

The characters in Moana primarily speak English, but the film features many cultural elements from Polynesian languages and mythology.

Are there any real Polynesian languages used in Moana?

While the dialogue is in English, the film incorporates words and names from various Polynesian languages such as Māori, Hawaiian, and Tahitian.

Why did Disney choose English instead of a Polynesian language for Moana?

Disney chose English to make the movie accessible to a global audience, while still respecting Polynesian culture through accurate representation and use of cultural elements.

Is the song 'How Far I'll Go' in Moana sung in a Polynesian language?

No, 'How Far I'll Go' is sung in English, although some other songs in the movie include Polynesian-inspired sounds and words.

Did the voice actors in Moana speak any Polynesian languages?

Many voice actors, including Auli'i Cravalho who played Moana, have Polynesian heritage and brought authenticity to their roles, but their performances are primarily in English.

How authentic is the language and cultural representation in Moana?

Disney collaborated with cultural experts and language consultants from Polynesian communities to ensure respectful and accurate representation of language and culture in Moana.

Additional Resources

****Exploring the Language in Moana: A Deep Dive into Polynesian Linguistic Roots****

what language is in moana is a question that has intrigued audiences since the release of Disney's acclaimed animated film. Moana, celebrated for its vibrant storytelling and rich cultural tapestry, is set against the backdrop of the Polynesian islands. The language used in the film is not just a random choice but a carefully curated element that reflects the heritage and traditions of the Pacific Islander communities. This article investigates the linguistic aspects of Moana, examining the languages featured, their cultural significance, and the impact this has had on global audiences.

The Linguistic Landscape of Moana

Moana primarily incorporates the Polynesian language family, an extensive group of languages spoken throughout the Pacific Islands, including Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga, and Tahiti. The film's creators opted to use a blend of languages and dialects to authentically represent the region's diverse linguistic heritage rather than focusing on a single language. This approach enriches the narrative and provides viewers with a genuine glimpse into Polynesian culture.

One of the most prominent languages in Moana is ****Māori****, the indigenous language of New Zealand's Māori people. Māori has a significant presence in the soundtrack and dialogue, especially in songs like "He Mele No Lilo" and "We Know the Way." Although the film is not set in New Zealand, Māori was chosen due to its linguistic and cultural closeness to other Polynesian languages and its melodic qualities that suit the musical elements of the film.

Why Not Just One Language?

Polynesian languages share many similarities, but they also have distinct characteristics

shaped by geography and history. Since the film's setting is an amalgamation of various Polynesian islands, the filmmakers decided against focusing on a single tongue. Instead, they integrated words and phrases from several languages, including:

- **Samoan:** Recognized for its rich oral traditions and significant cultural influence.
- **Tahitian:** Known for its poetic nature and use in traditional chants and songs.
- **Hawaiian:** The language of the Hawaiian islands, featuring prominently in the film's music and character names.

This multilingual approach helps convey a sense of unity across the Polynesian archipelago and respects the diversity within the culture.

Language as a Cultural Vessel in Moana

Beyond mere communication, language in *Moana* serves as a vessel for cultural identity, mythology, and storytelling. The film's writers and linguistic consultants worked closely with Polynesian experts to ensure an accurate and respectful representation. This collaboration helped incorporate authentic phrases and names, avoiding pitfalls of cultural appropriation or misrepresentation.

For instance, the name "Moana" itself means "ocean" or "sea" in many Polynesian languages, including Māori and Tahitian. This choice reflects the character's deep connection to the ocean, a central theme in the film and a vital element of Polynesian culture.

The Role of Language in Music and Dialogue

Moana's soundtrack, composed by Lin-Manuel Miranda, Opetia Foa'i, and Mark Mancina, prominently features Polynesian languages. Opetia Foa'i, a Samoan musician and leader of the band Te Vaka, contributed significantly to the authenticity of the linguistic elements in the songs. The music blends traditional Polynesian instrumentation and melodies with English lyrics, creating a bilingual experience that appeals to global audiences while honoring the source culture.

Songs like "We Know the Way" contain verses in Tokelauan and Samoan, languages rarely heard in mainstream media. This exposure has sparked interest in these languages, highlighting their beauty and importance.

Comparing Moana's Language Use with Other Disney Films

Unlike many Disney films that primarily use English with occasional foreign words for flavor, Moana takes a more immersive linguistic approach. For example:

- **Coco:** Focuses on Spanish, reflecting Mexican culture, but predominantly uses English in dialogue.
- **Mulan:** Uses English with Chinese cultural references but minimal Chinese language.
- **Moana:** Integrates multiple Polynesian languages directly into songs and some dialogue.

This sets Moana apart as one of Disney's most culturally and linguistically authentic productions, a factor that has garnered both praise and analytical interest from linguists and cultural critics alike.

Challenges and Limitations

While Moana's language integration is commendable, it is not without challenges. The blending of multiple Polynesian languages can sometimes lead to confusion for native speakers and cultural purists who might prefer a focus on one language for accuracy. Moreover, the film's primary audience is global and largely English-speaking, which necessitated balancing linguistic authenticity with accessibility.

Another limitation is that some Polynesian communities feel underrepresented or generalized because the film does not exclusively focus on any one culture but rather presents a pan-Polynesian narrative. Despite these concerns, Moana remains a significant step forward in showcasing indigenous languages on a global platform.

The Impact of Moana on Polynesian Languages and Culture

Moana's release marked a turning point in the visibility of Polynesian languages in mainstream media. The film has inspired renewed interest in language preservation and cultural education among Polynesian youth and beyond. Many educators have incorporated Moana into language learning curriculums to engage students with their heritage linguistically and culturally.

Furthermore, the film's success has encouraged other media productions to consider

authentic language representation, contributing to the broader movement of revitalizing endangered indigenous languages worldwide.

Language Revitalization Through Media

Moana exemplifies how entertainment media can play a pivotal role in language revitalization efforts. By featuring Polynesian languages in a positive and celebratory context, the film counters narratives of language decline and marginalization. It demonstrates that indigenous languages can thrive in popular culture, thus encouraging speakers and learners to continue the tradition.

Final Thoughts on the Language in Moana

Exploring what language is in Moana reveals a thoughtful and deliberate use of Polynesian languages that enhance the film's cultural authenticity and narrative depth. By weaving Māori, Samoan, Tahitian, Hawaiian, and other Polynesian languages into its fabric, Moana honors the linguistic diversity of the Pacific Islands while making their stories accessible to a global audience.

This linguistic tapestry not only enriches the storytelling but also fosters greater appreciation and awareness of Polynesian cultures. Moana stands as a testament to the power of language in film—not just as a tool for communication but as an emblem of identity, tradition, and cultural pride.

What Language Is In Moana

what language is in moana: *False Divides* Lana Lopesi, 2018-09-12 While we may talk back to the empire, we can't talk to each other. Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa is the great ocean continent. While it is common to understand the ocean as something that divides land, for those Indigenous to the Pacific or the Moana, it was traditionally a connector and an ancestor. Imperialism in the Moana, however, created false divides between islands and separated their peoples. In this BWB Text, Lana Lopesi argues that globalising technologies and the adaptability of Moana peoples are now turning the ocean back into the unifying continent that it once was.

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what language is in moana: *Language Contact and Change in the Austronesian World* Tom Dutton, Darrell T. Tryon, 2010-12-14 TRENDS IN LINGUISTICS is a series of books that open new perspectives in our understanding of language. The series publishes state-of-the-art work on core areas of linguistics across theoretical frameworks as well as studies that provide new insights by building bridges to neighbouring fields such as neuroscience and cognitive science. TRENDS IN LINGUISTICS considers itself a forum for cutting-edge research based on solid empirical data on language in its various manifestations, including sign languages. It regards linguistic variation in its synchronic and diachronic dimensions as well as in its social contexts as important sources of insight for a better understanding of the design of linguistic systems and the ecology and evolution of language. TRENDS IN LINGUISTICS publishes monographs and outstanding dissertations as well as edited volumes, which provide the opportunity to address controversial topics from different empirical and theoretical viewpoints. High quality standards are ensured through anonymous reviewing.

what language is in moana: *Settler Responsibility for Decolonisation* Susan Nemec, Billie Lythberg, Christine Woods, 2024-09-11 This edited collection presents perspectives from a range of disciplines on the challenges of dismantling coloniality in settler societies. Showcasing a variety of pedagogies and case studies, the book offers approaches to the praxis of decolonisation in diverse settings including tertiary education, activism, arts curatorial practice, the media, trans-Indigeneity, and psychosocial therapy. Chapters centre on the personal, relational, and political work needed to support decolonisation in settler societies in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, the United States, and Canada. Drawing from experiences in the field, contributors argue that to decolonise research and build authentic relationships with Indigenous communities, settler researchers must learn from Indigenous worldviews without appropriating them, disrupt colonial epistemologies, and reconcile their place in colonialism. Indigenising is discussed as a counterpart to the decolonisation process, involving restoring and centring the Indigenous voice within Indigenised socio-cultural, economic, legal, and political structures and institutions, including the return of land. The book is a rich resource for researchers seeking to understand and support decolonisation in settler societies, and will appeal to non-Indigenous scholars, students, and those involved in decolonisation work in community and institutional settings.

what language is in moana: *Artificial Intelligence in the Pacific Rim* Hozumi Tanaka, 1991 In the last decade, AI firmly settled into our industrial society with the expert systems as the representative product. However, almost every one of the systems could cover only a single task domain. In the highly mechanized world of the 21st century, systems will become smart and user friendly enough to cover a wide range of task domains. Systems with much user friendliness must be multilingual because users in different domains usually have different languages. Language is formed in its own culture. Therefore, promotion for cross-cultural scientific interchange will be indispensable for the progress of AI.

what language is in moana: *Rethinking Khoe and San Indigeneity, Language and Culture in Southern Africa* Julie Grant, Keyan G. Tomaselli, 2022-09-19 The San (hunter-gatherers) and Khoe (herders) of southern Africa were dispossessed of their land before, during and after the European colonial period, which started in 1652. They were often enslaved and forbidden from practicing their culture and speaking their languages. In South Africa, under apartheid, after 1948, they were reclassified as “Coloured” which further undermined Khoe and San culture, forcing them to reconfigure and realign their identities and loyalties. Southern Africa is no longer under colonial or apartheid rule; the San and Khoe, however, continue in the struggle to maintain the remnants of their languages and cultures, and are marginalised by the dominant peoples of the region. The San in particular, continue to command very extensive research attention from a variety of disciplines, from anthropology and linguistics to genetics. They are, however, usually studied as static historical objects but they are not merely peoples of the past, as is often assumed; they are very much alive in contemporary society with cultural and language needs. This book brings together studies from a range of disciplines to examine what it means to be Indigenous Khoe and

San in contemporary southern Africa. It considers the current constraints on Khoe and San identity, language and culture, constantly negotiating an indeterminate social positioning where they are treated as the inconvenient indigenous. Usually studied as original anthropos, but out of their time, this book shifts attention from the past to the present, and how the San have negotiated language, literacy and identity for coping in the period of modernity. It reveals that Afrikaans is indeed an African language, incubated not only by Cape Malay slaves working in the kitchens of the early Dutch settlers, but also by the Khoe and San who interacted with sailors from passing ships plying the West coast of southern Africa from the 14th century. The book re-examines the idea of literacy, its relationship to language, and how these shape identity. The chapters in this book were originally published in the journal *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*.

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what language is in moana: [] With Design: Reinventing Design Modes Gerhard Bruyns, Huaxin Wei, 2022-11-05 This collection stems from the International Association of Societies of Design Research (IASDR) congress in 2021, promoting the research of design in its many fields of application. Today's design finds itself at a critical moment where the conventional 'modes' of doing, thinking and application are increasingly challenged by the troubled ideology of globalisation, climate change, migration patterns and the rapid restructuring of locally driven manufacturing sectors. The volume presents a selection of papers on state-of-the-art design research work. As rapid technological development has been pushing and breaking new ground in society, the broad field of design is facing many unprecedented changes. In combination with the environmental, cultural, technological, and, crucially, pandemic transitions, design at large is called to fundamentally alter its modes of practice. Beyond the conventional models of conducting research, or developing solutions to 'wicked' problems, the recoupling of design with different modes should be seen as an expression to embrace other capacities of thinking, criticisms and productions. This selection of proceedings papers delivers the latest insights into design from a multitude of perspectives, as reflected in the eight thematic modes of the congress ; i.e., [social] , [making] , [business] , [critical], [historical/projective], [impact], [pandemic], and [alternative] with design modes. The book benefits design researchers from both academia and industry who are interested in the latest design research results, as well as in innovative design research methods. In presenting an interesting corpus of design case studies as well as studies of design impact, this comprehensive collection is of relevance to design theorists and students, as well as scholars in related fields seeking to understand how design plays a critical role in their respective domains.

what language is in moana: *Rethinking the Native Hawaiian Past* Kanalu G. Terry Young, 2021-12-12 First published in 1999. The kaukau a li'i were lower ranked chiefs who served the AIVi Nui (high chiefs). This work describes how that service role changed overtime. Equally important is this study's attempt to understand the NativeHawaiian past in the context of how the kaukau ali 7 lived. The formalrelationship between a kaukau a lVi and an AIVi Nui was based on theroutine performance of hana laxvelawe or service tasks.

what language is in moana: *An Introduction to African Languages* George Tucker Childs, 2003-01-01 This book introduces beginning students and non-specialists to the diversity and richness of African languages. In addition to providing a solid background to the study of African languages, the book presents linguistic phenomena not found in European languages. A goal of this book is to stimulate interest in African languages and address the question: What makes African languages so fascinating? The orientation adopted throughout the book is a descriptive one, which seeks to characterize African languages in a relatively succinct and neutral manner, and to make the facts accessible to a wide variety of readers. The author's lengthy acquaintance with the continent and field experiences in western, eastern, and southern Africa allow for both a broad perspective and considerable depth in selected areas. The original examples are often the author's own but also come from other sources and languages not often referenced in the literature. This text also includes a set of sound files illustrating the phenomena under discussion, be they the clicks of Khoisan, talking drums, or the ideophones (words like English lickety-split) found almost everywhere, which

will make this book a valuable resource for teacher and student alike.

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what language is in moana: *Other Voices Other Worlds* Terry Brown, 2006-04-01 Leading Anglican writers from around the world challenge the assumption that the communion is split between a liberal 'north' and an orthodox 'south'. Anglican churches worldwide are sharply divided on homosexuality. The dominant stereotype is that of a global south unanimously lined up against homosexuality as immoral and sinful, and of a liberal and decadent global north. The differences between the two sides are seen as fundamental, and irreconcilable. Nothing is further from the truth: homosexual behavior exists across the whole Anglican Communion, whether it is openly celebrated or quietly integrated into local churches and cultures. In this extraordinary book, in development for several years, this is exposed as a myth. Christians throughout Africa, Asia, and the developing world - bishops, priests and religious, academics and lay writers - open up dramatic new perspectives on familiar arguments and debates. Topics include biblical interpretation, sexuality and doctrine, local history, sexuality and personhood, the influence of other faiths, issues of colonialism and post-colonialism, homophobia, and the place of homosexual persons in the church. *Other Voices, Other Worlds* reveals the rich historical and cross-cultural complexity to same-sex relationships, and injects dramatic new perspectives into a debate that has become stale and predictable.

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years. But how can college students allow their faith to help them process everything going on? Whether it's about how to make this new place feel like home, questioning what to do in life, feeling overwhelmed by assignments and everything else going on, or something else entirely, this book is here to help students process this special time in their lives. With passages from Scriptures, reflections on common college experiences, prayers, and reflection questions, this book will help readers feel assured that they are not alone in their experiences or in their lives.

what language is in moana: Bloody Woman Lana Lopesi, 2021-12-06 *Bloody Woman* is bloody good writing. It moves between academic, journalistic and personal essay. I love that Lana moves back and forward across these genres: weaving, weaving – spinning the web, weaving the sparkling threads under our hands, back and forward across a number of spaces, pulling and holding the tensions, holding up the baskets of knowledge. Tusiata Avia This wayfinding set of essays, by acclaimed writer and critic Lana Lopesi, explores the overlap of being a woman and Sāmoan. Writing on ancestral ideas of womanhood appears alongside contemporary reflections on women's experiences and the Pacific. These essays lead into the messy and the sticky, the whispered conversations and the unspoken. As Lopesi writes, 'Bloody Woman has been scary to write... In putting words to my years of thinking, following the blood and revealing the evidence board in my mind, I am breaking a silence to try to understand something. It feels terrifying, but right.' These acts of self-revelation ultimately seek to open up new spaces, to acknowledge the narratives not yet written, and the voices to come.

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what language is in moana: *Restoring Identities* Upolu Lumā Vaai, Mark A. Lamport, 2023-11-03 In a sense, Oceania can be considered a microcosm of World Christianity. Within this region are many of the same observable trends on the global level that impact Christian life, faith, and witness. The geography of Oceania--the liquid continent--is unique. Christianity arrived in Australia and New Zealand in the late eighteenth century via British colonial powers. Indigenous Aboriginal peoples, Torres Strait Islanders, and Māori peoples were dispossessed of land, property, rights, and dignity. Christianity grew by migration and conversion (not always voluntary), and over time became tightly intertwined with culture. In the twentieth century, rapid secularization moved Christianity into the private sphere, and by 2020 Christian affiliation had dropped from 97 percent to 57 percent. However, the history of Christianity in the Pacific Islands--Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia--is quite different. Christianity arrived via Protestant and Catholic missionaries between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries and grew substantially in the twentieth century largely due to indigenous Christian efforts. Islanders brought Christianity to neighboring islands, indigenous theologies developed, and churches gradually separated from their Western mission founders. One of the great success stories of World Christianity is Papua New Guinea, which grew from just 4 percent Christian in 1900 to 95 percent in 2020. However, growth is never the entire story. Violence against women is endemic in Papua New Guinea and is often combined with accusations of witchcraft. An estimated 59 percent of women have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime (and 48 percent in the last year). As Christianity continues its shift to the global South, it becomes increasingly critical to heed the experiences, perspectives, and theologies of Christians, particularly women, in the Pacific Islands.

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