FIERY ISLANDS IN THE SEA

The Hawaiians of old told many myths and stories about their homeland, and the myths recounted above is just one of many about Pele, the volcanic goddess. The early Hawaiians fears, respect, and respected the goddess of fire, the goddess of the dead, and the guardian of the elements. Pele is said to be the daughter of Pu'uhonua o Hōnaunau and to have four sisters: Kūkahi, Ka'ou, Hina, and Hau. Pele is also associated with the goddess Kāne, the god of creation. Pele is depicted as a beautiful woman with long hair, often carrying a bowl of lava or a torch in her hand. She is associated with earthquakes, lightning, and thunder, and is often depicted as riding a donkey or a dragon. She is also associated with the ocean and the winds, and is said to be the mother of the ocean god, Kanaloa.

Pele is known for her unpredictable nature and her ability to create havoc when she is angry. She is said to be capricious and can be both loving and destructive. Her fiery temperament and her ability to control the elements make her a powerful force in the Hawaiian Islands. Pele is believed to live in the mountain of Mauna Kea, and is said to be the protector of the people of Hawai'i. The Hawaiians believed that Pele was a powerful force and that she could bring about both good and bad fortune.

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SEAFARERS FIND THE ISLANDS

Pele might well have been one of the deities who helped the first Hawaiians to find these islands. The gods of all seafarers aided them. Pele, the fire, the sun, the moon, the stars, those in the winds, clouds, ocean currents, even the canoe as it approached from the south, the huge kilometers out to sea. Even if Pele happened to be sleeping, mountains she had raised would have guided those first Hawaiians home.

They came from islands to the south—Archaeologists have concluded that those discovered came from central Polynesia, probably from the Marquesas Islands, about 1,200 years ago. The voyagers had sailed across more than 3,800 kilometers of open sea, not certain of the isolation that had protected for so long these remote islands. They set out to find a land, offering familiar plants and animals. The discoverers must have made the voyage, living a great double cause. For them to have discovered Hawai‘i was fast enough. To have survived the difficult years after they landed upon these inhospitable coasts was an even greater achievement.

For this would have been a most grudging land, offering them little more than a refuge from the sea and fresh water to drink. It would have given them little to eat, except a few kinds of fern friends and roots, bitter and tough. In no other way can we explain the arrival of so many plants which are not dispersed by natural means across thousands of kilometers of ocean. With the plants and animals they introduced, they altered the face of the land. They began the processes of change caused by man to which these islands are still being subjected.

Of food animals, they brought pigs, chickens, and dogs. Of plants, they brought seeds, roots, or stems of breadfruit, sweet potato, yam, banana, cacao, kiawe nut, mountain apple, ti, ginger, turmeric, sugar cane, paper mulberry, certain medicinal such as roots and ‘awa, and undoubtedly an assortment of weeds. They brought, too, invaluable things that also took root and grew, the culture of the “wonderful Polynesian race,” as Captain James Cook called these astonishing peoples when he discovered them here. They brought language, customs, rituals, the social sanctions and the laws they knew aschants, and arts and handicrafts. Above all, they brought their deities and spiritual guardians, “the four great gods, the forty lesser gods, the four thousand, the forty thousand little gods,” according to an ancient chant, to dwell in the land among them. And Pele would have been among them, creative and destructive, as she came ashore at the end of their long voyage.

Perhaps for a generation or two the discoveries kept in touch with the homeland. Later, as younger folk replaced the colonists, and Hawai‘i became the only place they cared to know, contact ceased. For several hundred years no one made the long and arduous journey, in either direction.

On O‘ahu, they established an ancestor of Hawai‘i’s 1,700 species of birds. Among alien weeds. This coastal area was more suitable for the plants and animals that still survive the isolation that had protected for so long these remote islands and their sheltered people, plants, and animals.

Traces of early Hawaiian settlement remain on the land. These are the remains of early Hawaiian people can be found. They did not intrude much upon the scenes near the summit of Kilauea, probably because they feared them. The ruins of only two religious and educational buildings have been recorded near the caldera: one a temple, or heiau, and the other, on the Waianuenue Ridge, the high wall above Byson Ledge.

At the southern end of the park, however, near the Kalapana entrance, the ruins of several fishing villages among alien weeds. This coastal area was more suitable for Hawaiians to live in: both sea and land provided all they needed to prosper. And here, too, they lived far enough away from Pe‘a’s lair to be able to dodge her wrath whenever she sent rivers of lava down the mountainside.

Adjacent to the park museum at the Kalapana entrance, stand the remnants of one ancient Hawai‘i’s most sacred places, Waiale‘a, the Temple of the Red-robed God. According to tradition, it was built in the 15th century, in the new high-walled style prescribed by Pe‘a, chief priest to the competing a‘ī. In the name of their fierce god, Pe‘a introduced several other novelties: a red feathered staff for a ruling chief to wear as a sign of his office; the abatement of prohibition for contraception when in the presence of their deities; the glowing-eyed, red-moutned guise of the god of war Ku‘u‘i‘i‘ii-ko‘o, the Kaha‘a‘a of Hawaiian warfare, who is the sacrifice of humans to that all-powerful deity.

Today, this national park, created primarily to preserve the natural beauty of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, is also a refuge for those native plants and animals that still survive the encroachments of civilization.

Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park, a world monument, is a showcase for the processes and effects of volcanism. Because Kilauea has been studied more intensively than any of earth’s volcanoes, it is one of the best understood. Geologists, geophysicists, geochimists, and volcanologists, working together, and cooperating with the world around, are improving methods for detecting the times and sites of eruptions. In studying Kilauea, they have got ahead of the creatures, finding out what is in the future. Most of the volcanologists, working together, and cooperating with the world around, are improving methods for detecting the times and sites of eruptions. In studying Kilauea, they have got ahead of the creatures, finding out what is in the future.

HAWAI‘I VOLCANOES TODAY

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Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park...

HELP PROTECT YOUR PARK

Your cooperation can help maintain the spiritual beauty of the park, please adhere to the following regulations. These regulations protect the park's resources and visitors. Eruptions at park headquarters are required for backcountry camping, for backcountry camping, and for backcountry camping. For safety, watch special hazards at Hawaiian Volcanoes: Stay on the trails. Kilauea's leeward side is usually dry and sunny. There's no record of freezing at Kilauea, but in winter the snow can amount to several feet. Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park.

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