FIERY ISLANDS IN THE SEA

The Hawaiians of old told many myths and stories about their homeland, and the myth recounted above is just one of many about Pali, the volcano goddess. The earliest storytellers were fine poets, perceptive observers of people, and excellent students of nature. They were aware of many things about their islands that are being explored today by modern research methods. Their account of the succession of Pali’s houses, for example, agrees with the relative ages assigned to the islands by geologists—Niihau and Kaua‘i are the oldest, the island of Hawai‘i is the youngest. But now geologists and volcanologists can tell us much more about the Hawaiian Islands than the original Hawaiians would have dared or had the means of describing. By including ideas and truths about the Hawaiian Islands, the Hawaiian CHain has been extended far beyond the limited knowledge of its inhabitants. And volcanologists have increased our understanding of the manner in which these islands were made.

The first—The islands in the Hawaiian archipelago are only the very tops of immense mountains that have been built up from the bottom of the sea during the last 25 million years. They have been shaped by eruptions of molten rock forced up from earth’s mantle through fractures in the planet’s thin crust. The Hawaiian Islands, however, do not all have generally gentle slopes. Some of the islands have a more steeply sloping volcano, with rather gentle slopes. This type of volcano with rather gentle slopes is called a shield volcano, because its eruption built up a submarine mountain with a broad, gentle slope. Some eruptions of lava built a submarine mountain around an area of softer rocks. The submarine volcano rose far above the surface of the sea. This type of volcano, with rather gentle slopes, is called a shield volcano. When it rose, the shield volcano was a submarine volcano. The shield volcano built up a submarine mountain, which eventually it rose far above the surface of the sea. This type of volcano, with rather gentle slopes, is called a shield volcano. The shield volcano grew in size and height as eruptions of lava continued to build the island. The shield volcano eventually rose far above the surface of the sea. This type of volcano, with rather gentle slopes, is called a shield volcano. The shield volcano grew in size and height as eruptions of lava continued to build the island. The shield volcano eventually rose far above the surface of the sea. This type of volcano, with rather gentle slopes, is called a shield volcano. When the shield volcano grew in size and height as eruptions of lava continued to build the island, the volcano eventually rose far above the surface of the sea. This type of volcano, with rather gentle slopes, is called a shield volcano.
SEAFARERS FIND THE ISLANDS

Pole may well have been one of the destines who helped the first Hawaiians to find these islands. The gods of all seafarers aided these—those in the sea, the breeze, the stars, those in the winds, clouds, ocean currents, even in the eyes of the ships and animals. But when they neared the island of Hawaiʻi, after weeks of sailing across the unknown sea, Pole could have been the one who guided them, for his name, being written as islands, and suggested the islands. Hawaiians believe the islands are of divine origin, and Pole’s name reflects this belief.

The Hawaiians were skilled sailors, and they had sailed across more than 3,000 kilometers (2,000 miles) of open ocean, not certain that they would ever reach a shore. A group numbering as many as 50 men, women, and children may have made the voyage, in a large canoe.

For them to have discovered Hawaiʻi was not easy. To have survived the difficult years after they landed upon these inhospitable coasts was an even greater achievement. The voyagers had sailed across more than 2,000 miles of open sea, and they had not yet lived in a place where food was plentiful. Animals and plants that they brought from the homelands could supplement the fare they pulled from the sea.

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The islands have distinctive floras and faunas—although they have found them not utterly barren. Despite their isolation from other Pacific islands and the continents, Hawaiʻi’s volcanic mountains have an abundance of native species. The Hawaiians named these species according to their characteristics, and the early voyagers brought these names to the islands. The Hawaiians believed that these names reflected the gods who created the species.

The islands are still being subjected to environmental change. The Hawaiians are working to conserve these species, and they are collaborating with scientists to understand the relationship between the species and their environment.

HAWAIʻI VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

Today, this national park, created primarily to preserve the natural setting of Mauna Loa and Kilauea, is also a refuge for many rare plants and animals that still survive in the islands. But native species and animals, which they added to the relieved of the sea and the volcanic landscape, have found materials for shelter or ornament, and they have added to the Marquesan voyagers—those who themselves may have created the first successful settlers of the human species.

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