

## PELE, PETROGLYPHS, AND PLACES OF POWER

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July 21, 2002

Pele is both legend and living goddess. Story has it that a fair woman with red hair from a distant land made shore on the Southeast coast of the island of Hawaii. She traveled with a party of family members and, upon arrival at what is now Southpoint, made an image in the sand for her people of that place. With my kids in a rental Jeep Cherokee, I went to this southernmost point in the USA to Green Sand beach, accessible only to four-wheel drive and by a descent along a circle of cliffs to a sheltered cove. It is easy to imagine this party beaching there. Or perhaps it was just around the point at Black Sand Beach. Pele is credited with bringing the concept of imagery to the land, of pictures as markers. There will be more about this when I talk about the mystery of petroglyphs.

Pele's dwelling place today is in the Halema'uma'u Crater 1,200 feet deep in the Kilauea volcano on the Big Island. The volcano is active with sporadic eruptions of varying intensity. The crater is two miles in circumference and lava travels from it underground in tubes and tunnels along the Chain of Craters road for twenty miles before spilling into the sea. On this same expedition in the Jeep Cherokee we drove out across the lava fields and at the end of the road made our way on foot following the red glow in the sky ahead. The lava crust broke under foot and I was certain they would get me lost.

Before Kilauea, Pele lived in the now dormant Haleakal volcano on the island of Maui and also on Mauna Loa. But this is part of her story, which I'm coming to. Despite myths of living human sacrifices to the volcano goddess, the custom has in reality been to make offering of the bones of an ancestor. Lesser offerings of leis, fruit, and a special berry called 'ohelo, and rocks wrapped in ti leaves, even bottles of gin are made today to appease the goddess.

But, first, some background on religion in Hawaii.

The first wave of Polynesian Hawaiians who arrived probably somewhere between 600 and 950 AD worshipped nature. In their animistic belief they found spirits and forces in forms and creatures to which they ascribed godlike powers. People, plants, stones had mana (spiritual power). Any object, animate or inanimate might be a god infused with mana especially a dead body or respected ancestor. Tales of the exploits of gods, moolelo, were kept alive by storytellers, comparable to the African griot, or Provencal troubador. Behind all this was a sense of order and balance. The main idea was that everything had its opposite, like dark/light, yin/yang. Respect was great for the forces of nature and care of the land and its creatures is innate to this religion.

Soon after the death of King Kamehameha in 1819, the Hawaiian religion was formally abolished. Forty years of contact with foreigners had shaken the confidence in their gods. Ruling chiefs saw that Europeanization and recognition as an independent nation required abandonment of the established state religion. At this time, the king shared a meal with

his womenfolk for the first time, heiaus and temples were destroyed, as well as images of the old gods.

American missionaries arrived a few months later. The high chiefess Kapi'olani, a convert, journeyed to the Kilauea volcano and publicly took issue with a priestess of Pele, reading passages from the Bible. She descended into the caldera, leading a procession to the brink of the fire pit where, in defiance, she ate the sacred 'ohelo berries and threw stones into the molten lava...all of which left her unharmed and hopeful to win more converts.

By the year 1859, Hawaii was 96% Christian.

The word missionaries is generally taken to refer to a determined band of Congregationalists who arrived aboard the brig Thaddeus in 1820 sent from Boston by the ABCFM after the formation of the Pioneer Company to the Sandwich Islands Mission in 1819. In forty short years, through education and conversion, Hawaiians came out of paganism and into Christianity and civilization. By the turn of the century, the Japanese brought Buddhism and Shintoism. Hindus and Jews each numbered about two thousand. Today the largest number (300,000) remain unaffiliated. And about ten thousand are in new religious movements and "lesser known faiths such as Baha'I and Unitarianism".

As in most religions Hawaiians had, and still have, a creation myth. The Hawaiian creation story is recorded in a great chant. In the beginning, there was only Darkness. In the void emerged a Thought. In the darkness was created the womb of the Earth Mother Papa. Light was created as the sky Father Wakea. Their union created a universe of opposites. Great gods were born. Ka'ne the Creator reigned over Kanaloa the Ocean, and Ku patron of works of men, Lono, patron of agriculture, the male ancestors of all life.

This is a ki'I, a wooden image, of Lono, god of peace and agriculture and fertility.

The female spirit Hina was also born, patroness of fertility and women's works. She was the protectress of Fire.

Now Maui is the hero of the chant. Pele's story comes later. Maui was abandoned by his mother Hina of fire as an infant. She wrapped him in her hair and cast him into the sea, but he lived and returned. His first exploit was to lift the sky. "In those days, ..."Next Maui decided more land was needed so he fished up the islands using for a hook the jawbone of an ancestress." Next in the desire to serve mankind, like Prometheus, he brought them fire....the tale is a tortured one I'll skip...but his greatest deed was to snare the sun and demand that it travel more slowly across the heavens.

From Tahiti comes the woman Pele  
 From the land of Bora Bora  
 From the rising mist of Ka'ne, dawn swelling in the sky  
 From the clouds blazing over Tahiti

Pele was born of Hina, in the ancient homeland; she did not come to Hawaii until long after the great gods had arrived. Guided by her elder brother, Kamohoaki, in the form of a great shark, she voyaged with brothers and sisters in a great canoe. Cradled in her arm, she carried her beloved little sister, Hi'aka in the shape of an egg. Hiaka emerged from her shell in Hawai'i and became a spirit of the dance.

For her home Pele needed a pit to protect the sacred fire entrusted her by her mother. She moved along the island chain but each dig was flooded by her angry sister, Na-Maka-O-Kahai of the sea. The myth coincides with the geological theory of shifting plates, in which the islands were built in an assembly line, the ocean floor, the Pacific plate, sliding over a hot spot in the under layer of the earth's crust. At the death of her mortal self, Pele became a goddess native to the islands and her spirit found a home on Mauna Loa, earth's largest mountain.

Nearby Mauna Loa lay Mauna Kea. Geologists list Mauna Kea as extinct. Legend has it the result of a battle between Poliahu, the resident snow goddess and Pele. Pele opened hostilities; she cast mountains of fire, melting the snows. But Poliahu recovered and quenched the fires for all time with fresh snow.

Many tales are told of Pele. For one Koko Crater on Oahu is said to be where the swinish pig god, who could transform himself into a handsome chief, pursued her with the intent to rape her. Pele's sister Kapo flung her magical kohelele (detachable vagina) to distract him, quite successfully, and its imprint may be seen on the hillside at Kohelepelepe. Theirs was a love-hate relationship. He filled with insatiable desire, she hurling fire and molten lava. Seeing that she was losing the battle, her brothers insisted she yield to him. The newly mated pair then divided the island into two realms, his wet side and her dry side, and the interaction of the two climates unites the land. If you visit there, you will experience the line where the rain stops and the beaches remain forever sunny and on the other side tropical rain forests stop and the beaches remain forever sunny and on the other side tropical rain forests are filled with lush vegetation. Here wild orchids grow in fields and the macadamia orchards and hot houses flourish.

Pele, like the other gods known to the Hawaiians, possesses the ability to change shapes and forms. She often makes appearances as a woman—sometimes young and beautiful and treacherous, more often old, either disheveled or imposing of mien, in which she is referred to as Madame Pele, or Tutu Pele meaning auntie or granny. These appearances usually take the form of a warning. There is a belief that bad luck will pursue anyone who takes away pieces of Pele's lava. At the Volcano Park, packages are regularly received with letters describing misfortunes and returning the rocks.

A story of interest is that of an American sea captain who retired and started a ranch on the slopes of Mauna Loa. This part of the island and all the way to the northern tip is ranch land. One doesn't think of horses and cattle in connection with the islands but indeed the giant Parker ranch, established in 1847, comprised 225,000 acres. John Parker, a sailor from Massachusetts, had arrived in 1809 and married a Hawaiian princess. Almost equally fortunate is our lucky Andy. It is in this part of the island

where he has built his house beside a stream with a view of four of the five mountains. Only Kilauea is so far as to be out of sight, unless erupting. Back to our rancher. While out riding one day, he came across a cave on his land where he found a large oddly shaped stone resting on a mat, which he took back to adorn his garden. His Hawaiian cowboys warned him it was an object sacred to the worship of Pele and must be returned. Being a Christian, he refused. When Mauna Loa erupted, the flow approached his house. He prayed to Jesus and read his Bible through the night. The cowboys rode away. The next day, the flow stopped. It had separated into two fingers leaving the house standing. When the Hawaiians returned, he said, "Now you have seen the power of God. What do you think of your Pele now?" "We, too, have prayed to the god of Jesus and rejoice you are alive," said the foreman. "But the stone is no longer in your garden." He confessed that they'd taken it to its proper place and made a chant of respect to the Woman of the Pit. It was said the man was never the same. A madness overcame him. He sold out and moved to Honolulu.

Found in at least one hundred places in the Hawaiian islands, petroglyphs enchant and intrigue. These are carvings on lava. Their style is both primitive and ultra-modern. Pictured are tools, animals, vessels and weapons. Mostly male human figures, warriors, athletes. There are scenes interpreted to be birthings and symbolic circles, possibly indicating beginnings and endings. Some circular indentation were receptacles for umbilical cords, which when properly treated guaranteed long life. Some interesting groupings of figures seem to tell a story and are often enclosed as in a cartouche. In Hawaii, Kaha Ki'I means to scratch or peck an image or picture, usually onto smooth lava called pahoehoe, for permanence, but they are done and found on sand as well, lasting only temporarily. Interpreters, it seems, are mystified, but ongoing studies indicate that some may have served a function as markers of travelers, recordings of people and place names, of journeys. It is also believed that they had a use in sacred ceremonies. And that some were made by priests, known as Kahuna.

Although these are pictures, they represent language. Hawaiians believed that there was magic and power in words. The names of places hold meanings for example, such as the word Pu'uloa for longevity.

This site below Kilauea on the Chain of Craters road near the present eruption site boasts the largest concentration of petroglyphs, and, of course, is endangered. Another site Andy and I visited at Puako, walking distance from our hotel. There Pictures are widely scattered along both sides of the Kaeo Trail. Kaeo means winning. The trail winds through low trees and shrubs which force you to bend over, up and down small hills and ravines. When it crossed a maintenance road and plunged into the woods again, Andy tried to lost me by stomping down the road toward the sea. I wasn't sure what he was trying to win, but that he was going the wrong way.

We have already noted that legend has it that pictures were brought by Pele. It is also believed that the white priest Pa'o arrived later at the same location. It was he who brought a new religion to the island carrying two gods, one big, one small—three dimensional objects and with them the concept of idols. He also brought a new way of

processing the tapa cloth made from bark—a way to imprint, rather than paint colors and designs, which changed socio-economic dynamics. He will be dealt with again when we come to places of power.

The origin of the petroglyphs is believed to be Polynesian, of a heritage south and east of Hawaii. Easter Island perhaps. In a series of migrations from a huge triangle in the Pacific, from Micronesia in the west to the Marquesas and south to New Zealand. Included are Samoa, Fiji, Tahiti, the Cook and Society Islands with Easter Island at the southeast corner. One theory is that seafarers spread them abroad.

The age and history is not at all clear. Similar pictographs are found among native North American Indians. Similar markings have been found in European caves from 10,000 years ago and in Sweden from 1000-500 BC. All seem to be part of a Stone Age culture moving across northern Asia to the Pacific, appearing at different places at different times.

New methods of dating involving radiocarbon, with the application of a varnish indicated that the linear and stick drawings are the oldest, followed by triangular and muscled or filled human forms and objects later. The evolution of drawing is indicated. (Here are examples from Puako of the oldest type). Some have actually been dated post the infamous arrival and dismemberment of Captain Cook in 1779. If you are not familiar with the story, Cook was joyously received as the reincarnation of the white god Lon and commingled harmoniously with the natives until some hanky panky and thievery resulted in a slaughter. These newer drawings depict horses, goats, and rifles, previously unknown. Those with names and words are after 1830 when schools for English were established. Dating is also done by history as by names of kings and legends of their exploits; it is possible that some on Kaua’I can be placed at 640 BC. Changes in sea level with a 3-12 inch rise every one hundred years indicate that sunken lava fields containing petroglyph fields in tide water date to 1570 AD or before.

A missionary gentleman, William Ellis, first came across the petroglyphs at the southeast coast in 1826. They had not been spotted before as they are mostly in out of the way places. By 1889 public interest was sufficiently aroused by an article entitled The Pictured ledge of Kaua’I in which one J. K. Farley speculated the pictures to be very old, as the beach had subsided six feet. This was followed by further searches and discoveries of more locations.

“The idea of a sacred place is apparently as old as life itself.” – Joseph Campbell

There are two aspects to this concept. The volcanic origin of the Hawaiian islands with physical energy and magnetic forces and resultant spectacular geography and the pervasive sense of mana, meaning spirit or higher consciousness. Despite the Christianization and destruction of the pagan gods, native beliefs flourish, maybe even are being reborn into the New Age.

Sometime in the thirteenth century, Tahitians arrived, in new wave of colonization. Pa'o, our legendary white priest, accompanied the party bringing the war god Ku, who demanded human sacrifice. Pa'o sent for the powerful Tahitian chieftain Pi'ili to strengthen the gods and restore respect and power to the Hawaiian chiefs. And he brought Kapu, a system of law incorporating taboo. Death was the punishment for breaking Kapu. As the laws became more entrenched and rigid, places of refuge cropped up, and those fleeing justice could take up residence, find protection and be rehabilitated by kahuna. Places of refuge are now held sacred. Pa'o also brought a new design for the heiau, or holy place.

The heiau is a place to capture energy. A circle made of piled stones encloses a temple with altars and areas for ritual, pits for bones, and twenty foot tall oracle towers for communicating with the gods. Ferocious Ki'I (wooden images of gods) guarded the heiau. A heiau dating to 480 AD is found at the northernmost point of Hawaii at Mo'okini. The temple was vastly expanded by Pa'o. Here, sacrifices were made to the gods who consumed the essence. It was used to practice deep forms of meditative prayer, for pseudo mystical effect, a drink, awa (kava) was imbibed. Priests, called kahuna, held and prescribed formulas for health, prosperity, security, victory. With Pa'o's arrival and the ascendance of the war god Ku, this became one of a chain of Luakini, heiau placed in mathematical alignment to a celestial object and/or ley lines in a global grid. A leyline is an energy line, joining places with high concentration of earth's force field, of iron and magnetic power. These are linked by the old Pagan religions in Britain, Peru, Arizona, and China and include Irish faery paths, German ghost paths and Dutch death roads. Research published in 1999 by Heselton introduces this concept.

At Puako on the west or Kona coast, now surrounded by luxury hotels, the place Andy went walking off in search of a way to the sea, is a sacred site of carvings in lava. An interesting group is of a file of thirty soldiers each above the shoulders of the other. Puako is linked to other petroglyph fields to the south by the trail of the night marchers or death marchers. This is an inexplicable phenomenon testified to by many witnesses, believed to be fatal if you gaze upon it unless one of the marchers happens to be a friendly ancestor. The only salvation is to throw off your clothes, hit the ground and play dead...and never look.

Along this coast, there are special temples or shrines to the fish god Ku'alu and sacred fish ponds. Fishing was a dangerous and highly respected occupation and offerings of the first catch were made to the fish god. A heiau dedicated to the art of surfing invented by the ancient Hawaiians graces an overlook at Kahalu'u Bay. Here surfers prayed for good surf, and also made offerings of fish. And just beyond lies Kealekekua Bay where Cook met his demise. The snorkeling there is unbelievable (I can guarantee it) and on the platform of Hikeau heiau, one of the luakini type, the unfortunate false god, would have been lauded after being received by the fifteen hundred canoes which rowed out to welcome him.

At South Point, the furthest southernmost point of the US is Ka-U, the domain of Pele. An unstable area of earthquakes, tsunami, and volcanic eruptions, it is a power vortex, a

doorway to the “otherside” as is the Bermuda Triangle...”a rip in the fabric of time”. There have been many sightings of UFO here and a resident, Miriam Baker, has built a landing strip of macadamia nut shells for them. The dense iron ore content is put to use by space shuttles to reorient their instruments in loss of contact with the earth. Here lava tubes conceal burial places for ancestors and places of refuge for those fleeing punishment from breaking kapu.

Not far, Kilauea volcano is located in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Visible hot steam is one of the signs of the powerful forces of nature at work here. Wisps of vapor, the smell of sulfur, shiny fields of black lava announce the presence of Pele, goddess of fire. When Pele is moved the crater springs to life, lava boils and fountains of lava glow in the night.

Down the Chain of Craters Road, at the end where two thousand degree lava pours into the sea, and seven miles along the coast is Waha’ula Heiau. This was dedicated by Pa’o to the war god Ku and was a temple of horrific sacrifices. In eruptions in 1200, 1450, and 1983, this heiau was spared by Pele.

Waipi’o (Curving Waters Valley) is a beautiful place with misty mountains, two magnificent waterfalls, a stream, green taro fields and a black sand beach. It was the home of King Wakea, ancestor of all Hawaiians. It was a meeting place for the chiefs and the cliffs contain their burial caves. King Kamehameha I was hidden here as a newborn for safety against the jealous king and warriors who planned to kill him. He had his revenge. In 1791, he overcame his enemies and united the islands.

In the valley are the remains of six heiau and a place of refuge. It is accessible only by four wheel drive by a steeply descending one way dirt road with hairpin turns. On a visit with my adventurous kids who took the low road through the stream bed rather than the recommended high road, the engine coughed out in the stream and water poured in. I feared being stuck when dark, but we were rescued by Portuguese speaking natives with cell phones and towed out at great expense. Night marchers are seen in the valley with flickering torches and drums and flutes are heard. Waipi’o Valley is a “leaping place of the soul” and a door to the dead opens at the black sand beach. There a pool connected by a lava tube to the sea was inhabited by a shark man who warned fishermen of sharks. It is believed he has escaped now to Maui, shades of Pele’s brother.

No one visits the Big Island without a glimpse of Mauna Kea (White Mountain). Here was the home of Poli’ahu, the snow goddess and rival of Pele. At thirteen, 796 feet above sea level is the highest point in all Polynesia and often snow capped. To Hawaiians it is “the gateway to heaven”. On the summit are some of the most powerful telescopes in the world. But natives oppose more technology. It is a place of strange energy. The Saddle road leading to Mauna Kea is known for sightings of night marchers and UFO’s.

There are places on other islands as well, but we couldn’t cover them all. Of particular note, for example, is Haleakais Volcano on Maui. Its crater Makawao was Pele’s home

before she moved to Kilauea. It is the strongest natural power point in the US and the largest dormant volcano in the world. The USAF has a satellite tracking station here. The energy configuration from earth and the high focus radiation from outside the atmosphere create a sacred vortex of natural power. The iron rich cinder cone Magnetic Peak has a magnetic field strong enough to deflect a compass needle. The town at Makawao is full of healers. The place is sacred. It is believed that Maui snared the sun here. Pele's shark god brother lived in this crater and still swims in the seas about the island.