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**EDITOR'S FORUM**

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**PELE, ANCIENT GODDESS OF CONTEMPORARY HAWAII**

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Probably no one will ever know exactly where the first Polynesian voyagers landed in the Hawaiian Islands. The earliest archaeological dates in Hawaii come from Oahu (Bellwood 1979:325), but there is no reason to believe that this was the first Hawaiian settlement. It may have been on the lonely, windswept point of Kalae on the "Big Island" of Hawaii, or on the verdant slopes of Kauai near Waimea, or even on tiny, barren Nihoa Island. Wherever the landing, the event passed unrecorded, and the imagination must be called upon to reconstruct the scene.

The islands must have presented a lonely, perhaps frightening aspect to those early human arrivals, but the joy of discovering land after so many weeks at sea no doubt overcame their initial fears. After satisfying immediate needs for food and water, those first Hawaiians probably made offerings to their gods for the safe voyage, as well as for protection in their new home. The deities they brought to Hawaii were the same great gods found among the southern Polynesian islands--Kane, Kana-loa, Ku, Lono, and the many other Polynesian gods so well known throughout the South Pacific in stories and chants. But most important to this discussion, they brought with them the memory of a deity associated with fire. In Hawaii, this deity became the goddess Pele, and during the early settlement period probably maintained an insignificant role in Hawaiian religious life. But on the island of Hawaii, Pele was destined to hold a greater position in the Hawaiian pantheon; the great

volcanoes became her home, their power her strength, and their unpredictability her temperament. A large body of myth evolved around the goddess Pele that told of her journey to the islands, her search for a suitable home, her love affairs, and her battles with her rivals.

When the first Europeans arrived in the Hawaiian Islands in 1778, Pele dominated the volcano area of Hawaii and was the object of a well-developed religious cult. Her most ardent worshipers lived within the districts of Hawaii most frequently inundated by volcanic eruptions. Here, she was a protective deity for the important families of the area. Temples were erected for her worship where priests and priestesses conducted rituals and offered sacrifices to appease her tempestuous moods. Throughout the rest of the Hawaiian Islands, she was known in legends and chants, but was less important as an object of worship since her fiery threat was not imminent.

Shortly after the European discovery of Hawaii, missionaries arrived to convert the native population to Christianity. Their proselytizing activities were successful, and within an amazingly short time most of the Hawaiian royalty had converted to Christianity with their subjects variously acculturated to the new religion. The result was, of course, the abandonment of the old deities. Members of chiefly families publicly renounced the traditional gods, and with the encouragement of missionaries, destroyed their temples and images. During the following century, the old gods declined as objects of worship, finally to be remembered only through legends except by a few diehards who refused to abandon the old ways.

An exception to the demise of the ancient gods, however, was Pele. Although her existence was repeatedly denied by missionaries and Hawaiian leaders (such as Queen Kapiolani, who personally visited the volcanic crater at Kilauea in 1824 to defy Pele's power), she survived the Christianization of Hawaii and lives today as an important figure in the worldview of contemporary Hawaii.

This paper discusses contemporary beliefs of Pele in the Hawaiian Islands as they have been reported by the English language press. The investigation begins at the turn of the century, when accounts of encounters with Pele began to appear in print, and extends to the present time. In addition, stories collected by the author during intermittent residence and visits in Hawaii over the past twenty-five years are included. Excluded from this discussion are the traditional Hawaiian myths and legends of Pele. These were early collected by students of *Hawaiiana* and have been frequently reprinted during the past century. Their currency serves to remind the Hawaiian public of Pele's tradi-

tional activities and doubtlessly inspires some of her contemporary manifestations, but their various retellings and reinterpretations warrant a special study, and are beyond the scope of this investigation.

This paper focuses on the various manifestations of Pele as reported by persons who claim to have encountered the goddess; the rituals, ceremonies, and offerings made to Pele in contemporary times; and nontraditional roles that Pele has assumed in recent years. Finally, it explores some possible reasons for the persistence of belief in Pele in the Hawaiian Islands.

### **Manifestations**

When a volcano erupts on the island of Hawaii, stories invariably begin to circulate about persons who have seen a Hawaiian woman who displayed behavior mysterious enough to convince them she was Pele. Probably such alleged sightings of Pele prior to a volcanic eruption are ancient in Hawaii, but actual documentation of them has occurred only during this century. In recent years, as the cult of Pele has been popularized by the Hawaiian media, reporters appear to scour the islands at the time of volcanic eruptions to find persons who have seen the illusive goddess. And almost always, someone has. Sometimes she is a beautiful young woman dressed in flowing red or white, while at other times she is an ugly old crone, decrepit and ragged--both traditional guises of Pele. But whatever the guise, she is the volcano goddess en route to the volcanoes to stir up activity. Sometimes she is simply seen by someone, sometimes she asks for food or lodging, at other times she is hitchhiking and offered a ride, during which she may engage in conversation, And almost always, she mysteriously disappears after or during the encounters.

The earliest version of the hitchhiking story appears in a 1926 article by Eliza D. Maguire. Since it no doubt served as inspiration for some of the later stories, it is quoted here in full.

One day towards the end of the year 1925, a vision appeared to a few people in the Kau and South Kona Districts. An old woman, bent and feeble, was walking along the roadside near Keeli, South Kona, when an automobile passed by her without any sign of greeting. A second automobile passed and again no notice was taken of her. A third went by; a new Ford driven by a young Japanese, and destined for a family said to be descendants of the Goddess Pele. He stopped and greeted her.

"Aloha!" She returned his greeting, saying "Aloha!" Then he asked, "Where are you going?" In reply she mentioned a place near to where the boy was taking his new Ford. He said to her: "Get in and I will take you."

On the way, the two cars which had passed the old woman by, were found stalled by the wayside with trouble. The old woman went by smiling.

When near the new Ford's station, the driver spoke to the old woman, saying, "My journey is soon ended, but if you are going further, I will take you." Receiving no reply, he turned around and found the seat empty. The old woman had vanished. On relating the incident to a Hawaiian, the Japanese driver was told that the old woman could be none other than Pele, the Goddess of the Volcano.

A 1937 book by Harry Franck described Pele's typical manifestations:

She usually appears in the form of an old woman asking some slight favor such as a bite to eat or a spot in which to spend the night, or . . . as a hitch-hiker. More than one person who has inhospitably refused food or lodging to some unprepossessing old woman has been mighty sorry for it afterward. Her hands are claws and she cannot be transported, according to those who know her best. Yet just before that latest eruption, she asked a Chinese living on Kauai for a ride, got into the back of his car--through a window, the story runs--lighted a cigarette and . . . disappeared into thin air. (Pp. 29-30)

Similarly, Tyler (1939) tells of a chauffeur who was driving to the volcanoes at night. Along the road he saw an old Hawaiian woman wearing a *holoku* (long Hawaiian dress) and lei, hitchhiking. He stopped for her and she regally climbed into the backseat, thanking him profusely and saying that she needed a ride to the volcano. When they arrived at the volcano the driver got out of the vehicle and opened the back door, but was startled to find that she had vanished. Brumaghim (1941) reports that Pele appeared as an old crone hitchhiking along the roadside late at night. Two cars passed her by, but were stopped by engine trouble some distance on. A third car picked up the old woman, and as it passed the stalled cars they began to function normally.

According to Ashdown (1950), Pele was encountered hitchhiking on

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the island of Maui. One night, a month prior to an eruption on the island of Hawaii, a group of Japanese actors was traveling home after a performance in Lahaina. As they drove down the road, "a white-haired woman dressed in a holoku and leaning on a stick" hailed them down. She turned out to be Hawaiian and asked them for a ride. They told her their car was too crowded, but that their friends were coming behind them in another car and they would give her a ride. She became angry and stepped away from the car. When the driver tried to start his car, it would not start. Meanwhile the second car drove by and later its occupants said they had seen no one on the road. A third vehicle, a truck carrying the actors' musical instruments, came down the road and approached an old woman. The driver stopped and the woman got into the cab with the driver and his companion. As they continued down the road they neared the stalled car of the first group of actors. When the driver slowed to assist them the old woman told him not to stop: "Go on! The car will not start. They would not give me Kokua (assistance)." The driver sensed the woman might be Pele, so he obeyed her. His companion, sitting in the center of the seat, also sensed the woman was Pele, so he eased away from her toward the driver. The old woman knew his thoughts and laughed, saying: "Don't be afraid. I won't hurt kind people. I want some tobacco." They offered her cigarettes but she scoffed at them, saying she did not like such tobacco. They stopped at a small store and bought some "Bull Durham and papers" for her which she seemed to like. When they reached their destination in Kahului, one of the men helped the old woman from the truck to the sidewalk. He turned to get back into the truck, and when he again looked in her direction the old woman had disappeared.

Pele has also been reported on the island of Kauai. Hardy (1957) tells of an event that allegedly occurred during the 1920s. An old Chinese man picked up an old woman one day while driving from Mana to Waimea. She rode in the backseat, and as they drove down the road asked for a cigarette and matches, which he gave her. As he neared his destination he asked her if she wanted to get out, but turning discovered there was no one in the backseat. He retraced his drive thinking she might have fallen from the car, but could not find her. His Hawaiian friends told him the passenger was Pele.

During a 1960 eruption near Kapoho, several persons reported seeing Pele. A Hilo man reported giving rides to two "strikingly beautiful maidens, both dressed in red." Soon after they reached the volcano area, the volcano fountains grew higher, the air became thick with ash, and

the passengers disappeared. Another man gave a ride to "a maiden dressed in red who insisted on drinking straight gin when the party stopped at an Olaa tavern" (Engledow 1960).

A Japanese man said that a man was once driving at night from Kona to Hilo on the island of Hawaii on a road that cuts through lava wastes. He saw an old woman by the side of the road, but drove past her without stopping. He later glanced in his rearview mirror, and, much to his surprise, the old woman was sitting in his backseat. The woman was, of course, believed to be Pele (Nimmo 1962). A variant of this story was related by a Filipino man. A man driving at night on Kauai picked up a beautiful young woman dressed completely in white. She sat in the backseat. He continued down the road at high speed. When he reached his destination he discovered that the young woman had disappeared from the backseat. The informant said he had also heard another version that claimed the woman was an old Hawaiian with long hair (Nimmo 1962).

L. R. McBride reports another motorist's encounter with Pele:

In 1962, a motorist near Kalapana was stopped at night by an old woman. She gestured that she wanted a smoke and the driver fumbled a cigarette through the barely open window to her. With a snap of the fingers the old woman produced a flame, frightening the visitor into speeding away. Days later he was still reluctant to admit that the woman might have scratched a match with her thumbnail. (1968:43)

A similar encounter was reported by a "college-educated, part-Hawaiian":

Here I was driving along the Kona Belt Road . . . just a little after dawn . . . and this old, old lady flags me down and wants to ride to Kailua . . . she gets into the back seat and asks me for a cigarette . . . I hand her a package over my shoulder . . . she takes them . . . I ask her if she has a match . . . I get no answer . . . I turn around to ask her again and she is gone . . . and so are my cigarettes . . . and I'm driving about forty miles an hour! (Quoted in Belknap 1967a; omissions in original)

A young Hawaiian man told me that his parents were driving on a lonely road at night on the island of Hawaii. At a bend in the road their headlights revealed an old woman, dressed in white, who had no feet.

They were frightened and did not stop to investigate further. She was assumed to be Pele (Nimmo 1967).

Pele's appearances do not always involve hitchhiking, for she approaches people in many different situations. Invariably, however, her appearance brings forth predictions of an eruption.

In 1927 an old Hawaiian man claimed that an old Hawaiian woman appeared at his home at dusk. She asked him for *awa* root, but he had none to give her. He offered her dinner, which she accepted. She ate an enormous amount of food and then accepted her host's offer to stay overnight. He made up a bed for her and then went upstairs to his own bed. The next morning when he awakened the blankets had been returned upstairs to their proper place, and the woman was gone. Although the narrator of the story was not certain the woman was Pele, the reporter and other residents of the island of Hawaii were, and anticipated a volcanic eruption in the near future (Stroup 1927).

A 1929 *Honolulu Advertiser* article reports, "Many stories are told of the appearance of Pele in the form of a withered old woman, and it is said that always following the presence, Kilauea again spits forth fire." A magazine article adds that Pele often "calls on people as an old woman and invites them for a smoke," which is a sure sign that a volcanic eruption will follow (Taylor 1929).

According to a 1934 newspaper story, Pele most frequently visits Kona prior to an eruption. She goes from door to door seeking food, and while the host turns to get the food, she disappears. If one refuses her food, she will direct her lava toward that house, while those who give her food need never fear her wrath (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1934a).

In 1937 an old Hawaiian man claimed to have seen Pele at Waipio and predicted that a flow would appear there. The next morning the volcano erupted and the lava flowed down the north slope of Mauna Loa (Jones 1937). On another occasion an old woman stopped at a country home to ask for tobacco. The occupant left to get the tobacco and returned to find the old woman had vanished. She was, of course, assumed to be Pele. On still another occasion, Pele was first reported in Kohala, on the northern end of Hawaii, and then near Hilo, on the southeast side of Hawaii. Within hours of her sightings, Mauna Loa began to erupt, first flowing in the direction of Kohala, and then turning in the direction of Hilo, allegedly following the path of Pele (Brumaghim 1941).

A Portuguese man from Hawaii told Robert Davis (1941) that the particular dress in which Pele appears will determine the type of eruption that will follow. If she appears in dark *tapa* cloth, "there will be

earthquakes and belching of rocks and lava from the cones," but if she appears in white, lava will simply stream down the side of the mountain. The informant claimed: "A man from Hoopuloa saw her about the 10th of April walking along the Belt Road."

A staff member at the volcano observatory told of his encounter with Pele in 1938. Late one August evening he and his family and friends were picknicking on the beach at Punaluu. As darkness descended they noticed an old Hawaiian woman move toward them over the lava rocks, dressed in "long black draperies like a nun's." Her face was indistinguishable, and shortly after she passed the group she disappeared. One of the children cried that the woman was Pele, and that she should be given something to eat. His mother told him they had nothing left but peanuts and she would not want them--besides, she was gone. The group went home, some convinced they had seen Pele. During the next twenty-four hours, a series of three hundred earthquakes shook the island, and the woman who had discouraged her child from giving food to Pele had an acute attack of appendicitis (Fergusson 1947: 162-163).

Prior to a 1950 eruption, many reports of Pele's appearance were made. As an old woman or a young girl she reportedly stopped at several houses requesting a glass of water. One person whose house was visited placed a bit of ti leaf in the water, claiming this would protect his home from lava. Various other residents of Hawaii reported seeing a strange woman, believed to be Pele, walking down the road or loitering about their homes. A group of tourists visiting the volcano were told by an old Hawaiian man to avoid a particular path because Pele had been seen there. They ignored him and continued their journey. Within minutes a strong earthquake shook the area. Had they not been stopped by the old man, they would have been at the crater's edge where they would have fallen into the pit (Rothwell 1950).

During the 1984 Mauna Loa eruption, a woman described a 1955 encounter with a man believed to be Pele at Kaumana Caves on the Big Island. It is one of the few accounts that portrays Pele as a man.

The woman said that she and her husband were visiting the cave when a strange looking man came out of nowhere. They began talking to him and eventually gave the man a ride back toward Hilo. "I thought he was drunk because his eyes were red," she said. But in the course of conversation the strange old man said the next eruption would be in Puna and later there would be a big eruption on Mauna Loa. Then he disappeared. Since there had not been a Puna eruption in some time, the



Waimea man and woman discounted what they heard. But the next day, Kilauea erupted . . . in Puna. "And now I'm wondering if the second half is coming true," the woman said. (Frederick 1984)

Pele's appearance does not always signal an eruption. In 1927 she appeared on Maui. An elderly Malayan man said that "a bent old lady" appeared at his door in Lahaina and asked if she could come in. He invited her in and she requested a pipe of tobacco which he supplied. She lighted the pipe with a flick of her hand. During the course of her visit, she said that she was Pele. The Malay described her as follows: "Her hair is coal black and on her head she wore a straw hat with a black, white and red colored band and her holuku of black was very much worn and covered with patches. She had a little dog with her." Two others reported seeing Pele in Lahaina the same day. From one, she requested a glass of water (*Maui News* 1927). There was no subsequent volcanic activity.

In 1951 a park ranger saw a "tall and cadaverous" woman with flaming red hair and "piercing eyes" on a road at night in the volcano area. Although it was later learned that the figure was a visitor trying to find her way back to Volcano House, the ranger was never told of her true identity and continued to believe he had seen Pele (Apple and Apple 1980). According to a 1959 report,

Alice Kamokila Campbell, a former territorial senator, had her visions of Pele added to the Hawaii state senate record at the request of the senate president. Mrs. Campbell said she had seen "a beautiful young woman standing on the embankment of my sacred pool. She wore a long flaming gown, and her jet-black hair hung down to her knees." According to Mrs. Campbell, this figure had appeared to her on Nov. 9 and, when recognized as Pele, disappeared. (Quoted in Flanders 1984)

A young Filipino boy told me an old Hawaiian woman once entered a store in Kona to make a minor purchase. When she left the storekeeper noticed that she had no feet. The storekeeper assumed she was Pele (Nimmo 1962).

A 1964 report describes how "on a path in a desolate region near Halemaumau, a man and his wife passed a beautiful blonde woman. When the husband looked back for a complete appraisal, the young woman had vanished. That same afternoon the couple decided the

woman was Pele and cut short their visit, and returned to the mainland" (L. R. McBride 1968:43-44). Delaplane (1984) recounts the following appearance of Pele as told to him by a "beachboy" on Maui:

Sometimes Pele takes the shape of an old woman. Many people have seen her. Sam Mia was a yard man and resident *kahuna* at Coco Palms on the island of Kauai. He told me about it.

"One night I was jus' sittin' in my house. Drink a little gin. I feel something behind me! Make my hair stand on end. I peek over my shoulders, see little old Hawaiian lady. Boy, I scare!

"When Sam looked again she had disappeared.

"That was Pele!"

Pele has been seen during actual eruptions as well. During a 1955 eruption, three men from the island of Hawaii said they "saw Pele walk through the lava fountains about one hundred yards from where they stood." They "couldn't tell whether she was clothed and couldn't make out her face" (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1955).

During the course of an aerial survey of an eruption in 1975, a geologist saw some people at a rest cabin near the eruption.

Two people were in front of the cabin and he saw a third person, a woman, on the porch of the cabin. Knowing the danger they could face, he radioed the Park Service, who arranged a helicopter, noting it would take two lifts to bring out the three people.

Later, [the geologist] found the helicopter had made one trip and brought out two persons who said, on questioning, that there was no woman with them. Still later, [the geologist] talked with his companion that day, who confirmed that he also had glimpsed a woman on the porch, a woman wearing a dress, a woman whose face and hair could not be recalled. But definitely a female form on that porch. . . . (Stone 1977:21-22)

The geologist did not state that the woman he saw was Pele, but the account certainly implies her to be.

A "scientist," who preferred to remain anonymous, told a reporter that he had seen Pele during an eruption on Mauna Loa: "The thing that struck me about the woman was that she was barefoot. . . . My hairs stood up. We went down to find her but she wasn't there. There

wasn't any explanation. I used to laugh at people who said they saw this and they saw that. But not anymore" (Nakao 1985).

In recent years Pele has displayed some curiosity about the proliferation of hotels in Hawaii, especially Hilton hotels. The only published reference I have found regarding Pele's visits to Hilton hotels in Hawaii is in Luomala's article (1972), which recounts three stories told of women, usually young and beautiful, who signed into Hilton hotels in Hawaii, and after being shown to their rooms mysteriously disappeared. Similarly, a Filipino woman from Honolulu told me she had heard that an old Hawaiian woman dressed in white had checked into the Hilton Hotel in Waikiki with many suitcases. After being taken to her room, she asked the bellhop to get her some ice water. The bellhop did so, and when he returned both the woman and all her luggage were gone. He claimed that her body as well as her luggage had emanated great heat. The woman was, of course, believed to be Pele (Nimmo 1967). A young Japanese man told me that his friend worked as a bellhop at the Hilton Hawaiian Village hotel in Waikiki. One evening a beautiful young Hawaiian woman, dressed in a long red dress, signed into the hotel with no luggage. As the bellhop showed her to her assigned room, he noted that her dress seemed to be burnt at the hem. He turned to open the window of her room, and when he turned around she had disappeared. That night there was a volcanic eruption on the island of Hawaii (Nimmo 1976).

No one has reported seeing Pele outside the Hawaiian Islands, although a story circulating in the islands in the summer of 1980 suggests that she may sometimes leave. The day before the spectacular volcanic eruption of Mt. St. Helens in Washington, a withered old Hawaiian woman was seen at the Honolulu International Airport awaiting a flight to Seattle. Not coincidentally, believers said, Mt. St. Helens erupted the following day (Nimmo 1980).

A common element in today's Pele lore is that the goddess becomes angry and sometimes causes an eruption if she is denied a request for food, water, or some other commodity. This aspect of the tales has roots in a traditional story, probably told long before Europeans came to the islands and commonly found in early collections of Hawaiian folklore. It tells of two girls, sometimes sisters, who are visited by an old woman who asks for breadfruit. One of the sisters denies the old woman's request, whereas the other grants it. The old woman leaves, but shortly after a lava flow comes to the home of the sisters. The one who denied the request of the old woman is destroyed, while the other who granted

the request is spared. The old woman was Pele, of course (Beckwith 1940).

Accounts of Pele's anger when her requests are denied appear as incidental themes in some of the preceding stories of her hitchhiking and other appearances. However, during the years of Pele's documentation by the modern press, stories have been recounted that deal specifically with this theme. The general message is: Never deny the request of an old Hawaiian woman, for she may be Pele.

Maguire (1926) relates a local account of how a Big Island village was destroyed by lava in 1926. An old woman requested fish from a man, Kaanaana:

Kaanaana . . . knew that just such visits and requests had been made to his mother and grandmother in years past, and now when this old woman had appeared to him and requested a fish, he had denied her and said the fish were all sold to the market in the city. Shortly after the home of the unfortunate man was destroyed by a lava flow.

A brief story in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (1934b) tells of the dangers of denying Pele's wishes:

She [Pele] goes from door to door asking for food. Sometimes when you turn to seek poi and fish, she disappears before you come back. If you refuse food, you are likely to be in danger of her fiery streams. But if you offer her what she wants graciously, you need never fear Pele's wrath.

Tyler (1939) reports that prior to a flow at Kupoloa, an old Hawaiian woman entered the village. She stopped at a house, said she was very hungry, and asked if she could have some fish. The family denied her food, so she turned, walked through the garden gate, and disappeared. Shortly thereafter, a lava flow came cascading down the hillside and obliterated the house where the old woman had been denied fish.

In a similar account an old woman came down from the hills into a village and asked for food. The people at the house stoned her from the yard and set the dogs on her. Further down the road, she stopped at another house where she again asked for food. This time she was fed. When finished, she asked her host if he owned his land. He replied that he did. She told him that he should mark the corners of his property with large white stones, and then she vanished. That night a lava flow

descended into the village. The land belonging to the people who had denied the old woman's request was covered with lava, but the land of the family who gave food to the old woman was spared (Tyler 1939).

Fergusson (1947:281-282) relates a story told to him by a Hawaiian woman explaining why a man named Ii was mentally retarded:

“One time,” Malia said, “a Hawaiian family would not give when people came asking food. They would say no food and then eat poi, fish, chicken, everything. One day a man came, hungry. But they told him they have no food, so he went away, and they laugh and eat. But that time no ordinary man, he. He maybe Madam Pele. . . . You haoles don't believe that. But you wait. I tell you. When they shut the door that time, that man curse them. He say every one of their children going to have something wrong. And that's what happened. One child go pupule house (you know, crazy). One kill man, go penitentiary. One killed in accident. One girl die with her child; and that child have no papa. And poor Ii, he the other one. I take care of him because Madam Pele curse his people for being stingy.”

During the spectacular Mauna Loa eruption in 1984, Pele requested food from a Big Island woman and, upon receiving it, told the woman that her home would not be destroyed by lava flows (Frederick 1984).

For many years George Lycurgus, longtime manager of Volcano House, was responsible probably more than any other person for keeping Pele in the public eye. Lycurgus came to Hawaii from his native Greece via San Francisco in 1893, when he first entered the hotel business. He acquired Volcano House in 1904, sold it in 1921, and reacquired it in 1932. He continued to be associated with Volcano House until his death in 1960 at the age of 101.

Lycurgus was a believer in Pele throughout his life. The skeptic may claim that his stories of seeing and talking to Pele, as well as his ritual offerings of gin to the goddess, greatly helped his hotel business, but in all fairness it appears the man firmly believed in the existence of Pele. Lycurgus was a colorful public figure in his later years, and, not surprisingly, the press periodically featured stories about his relationship with Pele.

In a 1944 article, one of Lycurgus' earliest contacts with Pele is recounted. He and his friends had joined a group of Hawaiians at a luau on the edge of Halemaumau, the volcanic crater traditionally believed

to be Pele's home. It was dark when they arrived, and shortly after their arrival they saw someone approaching.

There, not seventy-five feet away, was a skinny, bent old woman with straggly strings of grey-white hair hanging down her back, clutching a shawl to her shoulders with skinny hands. She was walking, with the aid of a twisted, twining coffeewood stick, toward the edge of the pit. (Howard 1944)

One of the party invited her to join them for food. She declined to join them saying she had work to do. She then turned, walked toward the pit, and disappeared. They became alarmed that she had fallen into the pit and so began to look for her. Someone suddenly realized the old woman was Pele, and almost immediately Halemaumau began to erupt so violently that the party had to mount their horses and leave the area.

Lycurgus, quoting an unidentified 1921 article, tells of an old Hawaiian man who, during his youth, saw Pele appear as "a beautiful young woman of great stature clothed all in white kapa" (May 1946). In his 1953 book *Castro* relates a conversation he held with Lycurgus regarding his belief in Pele. Part of the Volcano House complex had burned down and it looked as if the fire were going to consume all the dwellings. Lycurgus cried out: "God . . . can nothing save this place from complete destruction?" At that moment the winds changed, the blaze stopped, and the remaining buildings were saved from destruction. Lycurgus attributed it to Pele. When asked when he last saw Pele and what she looked like, he replied:

Dark robed, black hair, moving in the flames, but apart from them. I last saw her in the 1909 eruption. Twice before I saw her, always the same shape. . . . I can prove nothing but I believe in Pele. When Kilauea or Mauna Loa blaze up, strange things happen, things I can't explain. Don't ask too much. Why is it that the Hawaiians control the lava flowing by throwing chickens, roosters, leis, Ohelo berries and gin in front of the flood? They stopped Kilauea spouting September 6, 1934. You can quote me. I was there. (Quoted in *Castro* 1953)

When Lycurgus reacquired Volcano House in 1932, Halemaumau was inactive and business at the hotel was poor. A believer in Pele at this time, he decided to offer prayers and rituals at the volcano to coax the

goddess back to the crater and thereby improve business at the hotel. He and a Cherokee Indian, who acted as guide in the volcano area,

walked down to Halemaumau and invoked some prayers to the volcano goddess. Following that, they tossed into the fire pit an *Ohelo* berry lei made by Lancaster the Indian guide. As a final gesture, Lycurgus tossed in a bottle of gin which had been partially drained by him and Lancaster on the walk to the pit. More prayers followed and the two of them returned to the Volcano House for the night. (Castro 1953: 18-19)

Within hours after the men went to bed, the volcano began erupting. The Cherokee Indian, Alexander P. Lancaster, was for many years a guide in the volcano area and a firm believer in Pele and her powers. He was locally nicknamed "Pele's grandson" (Castro 1953:50).

An interview with Lycurgus on his one hundredth birthday reveals more of his views on Pele. When asked if he had ever seen Pele, Lycurgus replied:

Oh, yes. I tell you. I saw Pele, in the fire. There is a woman . . . you can see a woman, in the flames . . . she comes out and walks around . . . then she goes back in the fire . . . and prays. . . .

The Hawaiians believe in Pele. Certainly I believe in Pele, too. Pele belongs to the Islands. She will come to tell us what to do. She always comes when we need her. Pele is bound to come soon. (Quoted in McKenzie 1960)

A recent addition to the Pele stories in Hawaii is a white dog. Sometimes a white dog accompanies Pele; sometimes Pele seems to take the form of a white dog; in other stories the white dog itself, apart from Pele, appears as a central figure.

The first report I found in the Hawaiian press of a white dog in connection with Pele occurs in 1927. Harry Stroup relates a story told to him by a man on the island of Hawaii. The man was visited one night by an old woman who needed a place to stay. He fixed a bed for her, and when he awoke the next morning discovered she had mysteriously disappeared. The following evening he returned from his work and found a big white dog sleeping on his bed. He chased the dog off with a brush, and it ran out the door and down a trail which had only one exit. He

waited at the exit, but it never came out, having disappeared somewhere on the short trail. These events were all associated with Pele (Stroup 1927). During the same year, Pele appeared on Maui with a dog, but no mention is made of its color (*Maui News* 1927). A 1962 article gives one of the first accounts of a white dog sighted near the volcanoes prior to an eruption.

Occasionally she [Pele] appears as "Mauna Loa's Phantom Dog"--a small white dog seen wandering shortly before an eruption on barren lava mountain slopes where, according to staff members of the Volcanic Observatory who saw him prior to the 1959 and 1960 eruptions, "There is neither food nor water for miles around--yet he appears to be fat, sleek and well fed. It is very mysterious." (Mellen 1962, 1963)

In 1964 the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* carried a story about the white dog, as well as a photo taken of the animal at Mauna Loa observatory. The dog was spotted intermittently in the area after it made its first appearance in October 1959.

The little white animal, weighing about ten to fifteen pounds, figures in a local legend which says he is Pele's dog and that his appearance heralds a volcanic eruption.

His batting average as a prognosticator has slipped in the last year or so, however.

His first two appearances, in 1959 and 1961, came shortly before Kilauea eruptions. (Bryan 1964)

That same year the Inquiring Reporter of the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* asked: "Do you have any superstitions?" Among the respondents was a Hawaiian man who said: "I believe in the Hawaiian superstitions like Madame Pele . . . she creates the volcanic eruptions. And her little white dog--when you see its tracks that's a sign an eruption is coming" (Buckwalter 1964).

Belknap (1967b) relates a variant of the vanishing hitchhiker story that includes Pele's dog. According to him, an old Hawaiian couple were eating dinner one night when someone knocked on their door. They went to the door and saw an old woman with a big white dog. She asked for something to eat, so they invited her in for dinner and fed her dog a bowl of poi. After eating, she asked if she could sleep overnight. They assented and bedded her and her dog in a small room with a tiny



window, too small for either to exit. They closed the door and locked the only door to the outside. When they looked in the room the next morning, the old woman and the dog were gone, and the door to the outside was still locked. The old couple were convinced the woman was Pele and that she would never harm their home because of their hospitality to her.

I personally collected the following stories regarding Pele's dog (Nimmo 1976). According to a Japanese man from Hawaii, Pele can assume different animal forms, such as a dog or a pig. On several occasions, scientists at the volcano observatory have observed a white dog prior to and during an eruption; however, the dog has never been harmed by the lava. A Hawaiian man from Honolulu claimed that Pele often appears as a white dog near the volcanoes. According to a young Caucasian man from Oahu, Pele's dog can be found at the Pali Lookout on Oahu and is attracted to pork. Several young part-Hawaiian men decided to test the belief, They drove to the Pali with pork in their car. When they reached the top, the car stopped and none of the electrical equipment would function. Then a large black form moved out of the woods toward the car. The men threw the pork from the car and the form, believed to be Pele's dog, took it. The car immediately began to operate, and the men hurriedly left the area.

Delaplane (1984) relates the following account of a beachboy on Maui: "You see little white dog on de mountain, dat is Pele. Pretty soon dat volcano gonna blow its top, I'm telling you." A 1984 account relates that Pele appeared with a dog (no color mentioned) at the home of a Big Island woman (Frederick 1984).

As this paper amply documents, many people in Hawaii claim to have seen Pele. For the most part the sightings are by lone individuals, but in a couple of cases, several people together reported seeing Pele. The veracity of their stories was accepted by some, doubted by others, and the observers for the most part had only their word to fall back on. However, some people managed to take pictures of Pele, and when their photographs appeared in Hawaiian publications they caused considerable comment in the islands.

On 24 May 1924 a photograph of a current eruption at Kilauea was published in the *Honolulu Advertiser*. At first glance, the photograph appears to be a great column of smoke emerging from the volcanic crater. However, on closer inspection, the face of a handsome woman is clearly discernible in the smoke. According to the caption, the photo was taken by Bert Carlson a week earlier. He noticed the face only after

the photo was developed. Several prints were made of the negative to be sure that the face was not the result of faulty processing, but each print clearly revealed the same face. Carlson copyrighted the photo, and many copies of it were sold in Hilo. According to the story accompanying the photo in the *Advertiser*: "Old Hawaiians declared that it was the face of Madam Pele, and that she had shown herself and was leaving the pit in anger." There is no elaboration as to why she was angry (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1924).

In the July 1969 issue of *Beacon*, a magazine published in Hawaii, a colored photo of a woman's face in the midst of a volcanic eruption appeared. According to the editor's note, the photo was given to the magazine some months before by a person who had since left the islands. In a later issue of the magazine, several letters appeared from people offering identifications of the photo. One person (Payton 1969) claimed to have seen the picture while a student, and thought it had been taken by a "Mr. Stice." A second (Ahlf 1969) wrote that she had seen the same face in a painting at Volcano National Park. A third said the photo had been taken by Gary Stice, a professor of geophysics and oceanography at Leeward Community College, Oahu. "Dr. Stice is convinced that the picture is genuine, especially since he took the picture. However, he was certain that he did not, at the time he snapped the picture, see Madam Pele's face in the viewfinder" (Mattison 1969). The writer claims that Stice also saw a painting of Pele in Volcano House Museum and was impressed by the similarity to the image in the photograph he took. In a later issue of the magazine, the widow of a former employee of the Volcano Research Association identified the painting at Volcano House Museum, and claimed that "many of us saw faces in the fire" when she and her friends visited Volcano House (de Vis-Norton 1969).

In 1974 a *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* story claimed that "more than a few bewildered guests [at Volcano House] have seen the ethereal, cloud-like shape of a woman emerge from a large painting on the lobby wall." None, apparently, had a camera, since no photographs are mentioned.

Images are sometimes seen in lava flows. A Filipino engineer, residing on Hawaii, told me that he once took a photograph of a lava flow, and when it was developed a distinct face of a woman (whom he believed to be Pele) appeared in the lava, which he had not noticed when he took the photo. He claimed to have the photo at home, but circumstances did not allow our going to his home to see it (Nimmo 1976). A photo of a lava formation resembling a grotesque face appears in a 1979 issue of *Aloha* magazine. The photo caption reads: "Unique lava flow has sculp-

tured a view of Pele, Goddess of Volcanoes." The photograph is credited to Mathias Van Hesemans with no further explanation (Morrison 1979:65). In May 1982 a photo of an eruption appeared in the *Honolulu Advertiser*. A young woman from Waimanalo called the newspaper to point out that if the photo is turned on its side, the figure of Pele is evident "as a well formed young lady with her hair swirling out to the right." The photographer who took the picture did not notice the figure until it was brought to his attention (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1982). During the 1984 eruption of Mauna Loa, three photos of Pele's face in the volcanic smoke were produced (one taken in 1963) and published (*Hawaii Tribune-Herald* 1984a).

Some people claim that Pele sometimes appears as a fireball moving across the sky. "Before the 1950 eruption Kona people said they saw a thin greenish yellow ball of fire falling slowly into the forest" (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1955). Mary Kawena Pukui told of an incident that occurred during her childhood:

As a young girl, she saw a ball of fire moving slowly from the vicinity of Kilauea Crater and rising up the side of giant Mauna Loa. Her older relatives and friends, who also witnessed the phenomenon, told her that it was Pele going to visit her other home in the crater of Mokuaweoweo atop Mauna Loa. (Mullins 1977: 32)

In April 1984 a fireball was seen traveling from Kilauea to Mauna Loa. At the time, eruptions were occurring in both places. A park ranger claimed that "traditional lore holds that Pele at times travels in her *po-poahi* or fireball form when she wants to assert her domain" (Takeuchi and Ten Bruggencate 1984).

### **Rituals and Ceremonies**

Pele is real enough to many people in Hawaii to warrant special rituals and ceremonies in her honor. There is no longer a large organized cult of Pele with *heiaus*, priests, and priestesses as there appears to have been in pre-European Hawaii, but throughout this century individuals and small groups have ritually appeased and approached the goddess through various ceremonies and offerings.

Not surprisingly, much Pele worship is revived by Hawaiians during volcanic eruptions, especially when their homes are threatened by the lava flows. Maguire (1926) reports that in 1916 she saw an old Hawai-

ian woman make "all the customary rites for appeasing Pele's wrath" when a flow threatened to destroy her home. Part of those rites included a chant to Pele, which the author quotes and translates as:

*"E hoi e Pele i ke Kushiwi  
I na ko lili ko inana."*

(Go back to your mountains O Pele  
and there appease your jealousy and wrath.)

In 1925 Maguire saw descendants of the above-mentioned old woman conduct rituals to divert another lava flow that threatened their home. This time they placed two small red flags at the back boundaries of the house, threw sugarcane, sweet potatoes, *awa* root, and even money into the lava flow. Despite their efforts, however, their home was destroyed. The author saw the same flow destroy the village of Hoopuloa. As the lava approached, the villagers prepared "offerings of their choicest pigs, *awa* was brewed and prayers and incantations were chanted." In addition, the villagers decorated their graves with leis "for Pele to admire." Again the lava destroyed the homes. One old woman, however, was so convinced that Pele would not harm her that she had to be forcibly removed from her home minutes prior to its destruction by lava. A 1940 news story reports that a Chinese man was able to divert Pele's flow with an offering of *awa*:

One of the freaks of the eruption involves an aged Chinese *awa* root cultivator. As the lava coursed down the mountain-side, his small farm appeared to be directly in the path of the coming stream.

To protect his home, he resorted to Hawaiian tradition. Gathering up bundles of *awa* root, he proceeded to the face of the flow and made an offering to Pele, the volcano goddess.

The streams immediately made a detour, missing his home completely. And the old farmer made quite a business of selling hot coffee and food to spectators. The fact that there was a slight rise in the ground just above the old man's home was overlooked with fine disdain by believers in the potency of the offerings to Pele. (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1940)

Other rituals were performed to appease the goddess. Kosch (1934) recounts a ceremony to Pele he saw during an eruption in 1931. At

Halemaumau, "A hula dancer held sway for a short time on the crater's edge, and several sacred songs were sung by an old Hawaiian and his wife in an effort to please Pele." During a 1955 eruption at Kilauea, residents from the endangered village of Kapoho tried to divert Pele's flow by chanting at the edge of the lava and offering gifts of breadfruit, bananas, pork, and tobacco (Herbert and Bardossi 1968:35). A 1984 flow threatened the town of Hilo. With the cooperation of the mayor of the Big Island "a 'native Hawaiian cultural leader' and a group of followers went to the volcano to make offerings to Pele of red fish, young taro root and *awa* root" (Taylor 1984).

In 1925 an elaborate ceremony was held at the edge of Halemaumau, supposedly to attract Pele back to the volcano, which had shown no activity in over a year, but in all probability a project of the Hawaii Visitors Bureau to promote tourism in the islands, specifically in the volcano area. The ceremony is nonetheless worth recounting in some detail since it represents not only the largest such ceremony held for Pele in recent times, but also gives possible hints of the details of traditional Pele worship since a number of old Hawaiian priests and *kahunas* participated. To bolster participation in the ceremony, advertisements of its observance were published in various island newspapers, one of which reads as follows:

They will woo Pele--March 21st, just as it was done a hundred, two hundred years ago!

All the old colorful rites with which Hawaiians of old worshipped Pele, goddess of fire.

A corps of hula dancers will move to the slow and colorful rhythms of the old religious hulas now seldom seen. Drums and gourds, beaten by old men learned in the ancient measures, will be the only music.

Prayers taken from melees hundreds of years old, will be intoned by men who learned them from their fathers and grandfathers. It will be the remembered saga of an old and great race.

And why are these old rites revived after hundreds of years? To woo back Pele to her traditional home in the Kilauea Crater (Hawaii National Park), to petition her once more to wield her magic spade which, wherever it struck the earth, called out fire and molten lava.

The Hawaiians believe their offerings will bring the goddess back, that the lava again will flow. Perhaps--who knows--

their faith will be rewarded. For it has been said that mountains may be so moved.

It will be something great to remember. To miss it would be to deny oneself a profound experience. The *Haleakala* leaves Friday evening, March 20th. It will have you back in Honolulu early Monday morning. You will spend Saturday night at the Volcano House, near the crater. It will be more than a weekend. It will be an event! Make your reservations now." (Quoted in Sabin 1925)

Despite the obvious commercial overtones of the affair, the ceremony displayed various aspects of traditional Hawaiian religion. Although one might wish for a more anthropological interpretation of the events, Sabin's journalistic account appears to be the only one in print:

Darkness was near when the ceremonies were commenced. Participants approached the platform from two tents, one for the kahunas or priests and the other for the dancers and chanters. Emerging through the silently drifting steam in a weird procession,--spears, feather helmets, and kahilis or banners of feathers,--they presented a ghostly spectacle--a sort of miraculously cinematographed procession.

Ninety-year-old George Kalama led the Kahunas, white bearded and full of dignity and deep sincerity, though bent and very slow of movement.

And there was Mrs. Helen Desha Beamer, who had brought all these worshippers of Pele together for the ceremonies. Clad in a long robe of yellow, she wore red wreaths of leis about her head and shoulders.

All wearing garlands, dancers and chanters were colorfully garbed in yellow and red, some of the dancers gracefully swaying skirts of great green ti leaves. There was a chief of the old days in red and yellow feathered helmet and cloak. There were spearmen, and kahili bearers, and young men carrying torches made of kukui nuts bound up in the leaves of ti. . . .

\* \* \*

The priests ascended the platform. . . . The wooing of Pele, for the return of Halemaumau's lava lake, was begun. The Reverend Kalaiwaa, a Christian pastor of Waimea, gave utterance to a brief prayer.

To be sure, a churchman of the Christian faith was assisting in the wooing of a pagan goddess! For that matter, probably all who joined in the ceremonies have their names in the church rolls of the islands. . . .

George Kalama, the aged kahuna--and, alas, he was clothed, like the Reverend Kalaiwaa, in the coat and trousers of our modern progress and culture--knelt on the platform and performed certain olden rites with various articles of mystery, --green branches, a bottle of white liquid, and several small packages of ti leaves. Whatever may have been the thoughts or convictions of those about him, spectators or performers, he was thoroughly engrossed in whatever he did or said. It was as if he were there alone with Pele, communing with the spirit of Creation. And his every word and gesture were as those of one who has many times celebrated such holy rites. Always he chanted as he prepared the bundle that held such offerings as he knew were acceptable to Hawaii's goddess of volcanoes.

This offering was ready to be cast into the darkening depths, when there came a sudden rumbling from the pit--an avalanche from the further wall.

Immediately the crowd quickened, startled. . . . For a few seconds--much less than half a minute--there was possibility of a panic, but Hawaiian guards called out that there was nothing to fear; . . . the word was quickly passed that the disturbance was but one of the frequent minor avalanches from Halemau's walls. . . .

When the kahuna, Kalama, had given the mysterious offering a final touch and blessing, Mrs. Beamer hurled it far out over the platform's rail. A root of awa followed the magic bundle. Then there were moments of waiting, spectators speaking in awed whispers.

Old Kalama peered into the pit as if watching for a sign, as if looking for a wink of lava in the far bottom, or a gush of the hot molt from a wall. Meanwhile his kahuna companions, Kalaiwaa of Waimea and Hoochie of Kau, chanted ancient meles.

And then great clouds of steam ascended from the black pit. But no fire!

Flowers were thrown to Pele, and her favorite chants were chanted.

There, at the edge of the steaming crater, in the swiftly falling darkness, two thousand people stood in silence, listening to the weird chanting, and watching the dancing of the hula girls.

Now the platform was crowded--too much so. Beautiful girls, each representing one of Hawaii's lei of lovely isles, gave unto Pele a wreath of flowers, of flowers sacred to her island. Each chanted as she approached the outer edge of the platform and gracefully threw her floral sacrifice to sulky Pele.

Madam Pele, in spite of sacrifices of pig and other dainties, ceremoniously bundled and properly prayed over, and in spite of chants and dances, gave no sign further than greater steam clouds and the chuckle of the small avalanche that set some of the hundreds jumping. She was not ready. (Sabin 1925)

In conclusion Sabin's article quotes a *Honolulu Advertiser* news story of the proceedings claiming that twice before, once "many years ago" and the second time three years prior to the event, the old kahuna, George Kalama had successfully conducted ceremonies at the edge of the crater, which resulted in calling Pele and causing the volcano to erupt (Sabin 1925).

This elaborate ceremony was apparently the first of several that have been centered around Pele to promote tourism for the islands. An event similar to the elaborate 1925 ceremony was held at Kilauea in 1928 as part of the Cook Susquicentennial celebration. A special stage was erected near the edge of the pit where dancers performed in honor of Pele while offerings of leis were tossed into the crater. Various small avalanches punctuated the ceremony, but apparently no further activities resulted (Apple and Apple 1978). A more recent example is reported in 1975. During Aloha Week, a period of special activities for tourists and local people in Hawaii, a ceremony was held at Halemaumau attended by various dignitaries. Dances and chants were performed for Pele while flowers and offerings wrapped in ti leaves were tossed into the crater for the goddess (Hughes 1975).

Other kinds of offerings have been made to Pele. A story in Thrum's *Hawaiian Annual* (1927), based on a newspaper account of the same flow that destroyed Hoopuloa described by Maguire (1926), mentions chickens, pigs, and money, as well as silk handkerchiefs, leis, chewing gum, sugarcane, leaf tobacco, taro roots, and sweet potatoes with vines attached. Some Hoopuloa residents claimed that Pele was angry because a pig intended for her sacrifice had been eaten at a feast by humans. Following "the Hawaiian belief" that the volcano would never strike a house in which a light was burning, a lantern was placed in each of the houses at Hoopuloa. A "Japanese woman" and a "number of white men" put quarters in the lava flow as offerings to Pele.



Franck (1937:28) describes the contents of a package, believed to be an offering to Pele, found on the rim of Halemaumau 1 June 1932. The package contained "a white dress--a *holoku*, . . . a huge pair of corsets, leis of *lehua* flowers, food wrapped in ti leaves, a *lauhala* mat wide enough for two sleepers, calabashes, and a bottle of--water!"

In an account of contemporary beliefs in Pele, Tyler (1939) tells of a group of young people returning to their hotel on the island of Hawaii at night. While driving along a crater road, an old woman suddenly appeared before the car. They could not avoid hitting the old woman, but when they got out they could find no sign of her. That night Halemaumau began to erupt. The driver of the car, a young Japanese woman, began to think that perhaps the woman they hit was Pele, and that she was erupting out of anger. So the next morning she went to Halemaumau and threw *ohelo* berries into the pit. By evening the eruption had subsided.

Fumiko Fujita (1946) recounts one of the few recorded cases of human bones offered to Pele. According to Beckwith (1940), this was a common practice among pre-Christian Hawaiians who believed themselves related to Pele. Such offerings were believed to insure an immortality in the volcano to the spirit of the deceased. According to Fujita's account, an old Hawaiian man gave the bones of an infant wrapped in paper to a tourist guide to throw into Kilauea crater. The same account mentions "silver dollars, white chickens, berries of the *ohelo* and strawberries, leis, pigs and fish" as suitable offerings to Pele. Still other offerings were made in a ceremony witnessed by a professor from the University of Hawaii during the 1926 Hoopuloa flow:

While sitting on the elevated edge of an old lava flow with two part-Hawaiian teachers, I saw half a dozen Hawaiians from the village cross to about the middle of the advancing front of the flow. They deposited a bottle of liquor, a can of tobacco, and a package of cigarette papers at the front of the flow which would soon bury these articles.

One of the group offered a prayer to Pele, a respectful request that she be patient and enjoy a drink and a smoke until the pig, which they were roasting in the village, should be properly roasted and ready to bring to her.

An hour or so later, the party of Hawaiians, now numbering a dozen or more, came back up the road carrying a pig. They again crossed to the front of the flow and deposited the pig where it would be further roasted by fresh lava. The pig was, of

course, the climax of the sacrifice to Pele. Both the parties conducted themselves with the greatest dignity, solemnity and sincerity. (Palmer 1951)

In 1952 Clarice B. Taylor reported that Hawaiians still conduct ceremonies of sacrifice and burial at the volcanoes in honor of Pele. According to her, some families living in the districts of Puna and Kau of Hawaii have priests who regularly conduct rituals to Pele. Some of these people still follow traditional burial practices whereby the body is placed in a burial cave until the flesh falls from the bones, at which time the bones are then taken to Kilauea volcano. Unfortunately, she does not reveal the source of her data.

The bundle of bones, wrapped in red and black, is carried at night to Kilauea.

A Priest of Pele stands at the edge of the pit, chanting. He tells the goddess of the one who is dead and makes suitable offering such as whiskey, chicken or pig.

Then he tosses the bundle into Pele's lava. If the bundle sinks, Pele has accepted one of her own. If not, it is tossed out of the pit with an explosion and one knows that the dead person was not a true member of the Pele family. (Taylor 1952)

Throughout his life, George Lycurgus, the manager of Volcano House, made offerings of gin to Pele. In 1952, shortly after Halemauau began erupting, Lycurgus staged an elaborate homage to Pele on the rim of the fire pit. Many spectators and entertainers were invited, and at an appropriate, dramatic time, Lycurgus appeared on horseback. He "got off the horse and joined in the ceremony, tossing into the pit his *Ohelo* berries and bottle of gin" (Castro 1953:21). On his one hundredth birthday, Lycurgus again mentioned gin and *ohelo* berries as suitable offerings for Pele (McKenzie 1960).

Lycurgus' son, Nick, assumed management of Volcano House when his father became too old to handle the work. After the old man's death, his son continued the rituals to Pele. When asked in a newspaper interview if he gave credit to Pele for his success as a hotelman, he replied: "Indeed I do. . . . During an eruption we're always jammed. I give her a little gin. She's always welcome there" (Wall 1964). A newspaper story in 1968 also mentions the gin offering he occasionally made to Pele (Bryan 1968). Similarly, two hotels at Kona, Hawaii, give cases of gin to

Pele during her eruptions in order to "keep her happy" (Delaplane 1983).

When the spectacular 1959-1960 eruption began, which eventually destroyed the town of Kapoho, Hawaiian Airlines provided gin for Pele. At the beginning of the activities Nick Lycurgus, manager of Volcano House, threw a bottle of gin into the crater at Kilauea Iki to encourage more activity (Flanders 1984). However, as the flow continued and began to threaten Kapoho, attempts to stop the flow were made:

Police officers drove Naluahine, a 102-year-old resident of Kona, on the 3½ hour journey to Kapoho to make an appeal to Pele. With the aid of crutches, the old man reached the lava flow and recited a prayer. Then, folding two dollar bills reverently, he tossed them on the lava. According to witnesses, the flow divided around the bills. Although Naluahine continued to pray for three-quarters of an hour, the money failed to ignite. But when Naluahine said in Hawaiian, "I guess Pele is really angry and will not accept my offering," the bills caught fire. Naluahine seemed gratified and the residents relieved. (Flanders 1984)

The flow persisted, however, and eventually the town was destroyed. One resident evacuated everything from his house except a bottle of kerosene that he left for Pele (Flanders 1984).

In 1960, the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* reported that a Chinese-Hawaiian man sang a Chinese song as he tossed sacrifices of breadfruit, bananas, port, and tobacco wrapped in Christmas paper into a lava flow (Wall 1960). Several years later a newspaper photo shows a man identified as a national park historian throwing "ohelo berries into Pele's Halemaumau home . . . to encourage her to put on a good show for the thousands of park visitors" (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1967).

In 1967 a young Hawaiian man told me that in a small town in Puna, a Hawaiian woman religiously made small offerings and sacrifices to Pele. When a nearby volcano erupted and lava descended on the town, all the houses were devoured except the faithful woman's home, which can still be seen standing to this day (Nimmo 1967).

Pele is increasingly included in holidays of contemporary Hawaii. A 1972 news story in the *Honolulu Advertiser* reports an accident suffered by the assistant manager of Volcano House on Mother's Day. The young man had strayed from a main path in the volcano area and fallen into

one of the many crevices that punctuate the area. The fall resulted in various broken bones, fractures, cuts, and bruises. An employee of Volcano House later told him that Pele was responsible for his fall because he had not offered her champagne on Mother's Day. The assistant manager reported:

He told me that the three days I shouldn't forget are New Year's, Christmas and Mother's Day. . . . All the Hawaiian people who worked for me and who lived in the area were really shook up. They called a Hawaiian minister to bless them, the Volcano House and me. (Quoted in Woo 1972)

A variant of the same story was told to me by a Caucasian female resident of Hawaii.

When the present manager of Volcano House assumed his job, he said he would not continue to give gin and other offerings to Pele as the previous managers had done. Shortly after his announcement, two of the waitresses at Volcano House were injured in an automobile accident on their way home from work. The manager went to visit them in the hospital, and as he stepped out of the hospital to have a smoke, he stepped into a fifteen foot crevice. The local people said that his accident, as well as that of the waitresses, was due to the fact that he had not made offerings to Pele. Subsequently, the manager revived the practice of making offerings to Pele. (Nimmo 1976)

Unlike the assistant manager, Al Pelayo, the manager of Volcano House, continued the tradition of offerings to Pele. He reported that after his arrival at Volcano House in November 1971, employees began to suggest that he make offerings to Pele. His new duties kept him busy, however, so it was not until February that he found time to make the offerings. Advised by his employees, he ordered a bottle of good gin, wrapped it in ti leaves, and lowered it into the crater. Within an hour there was a minor eruption that was interpreted as Pele's acknowledgment of the gin. Pelayo claims that he orders *maile* leis to present to Pele on Mother's Day, Christmas, and New Year's. He continues:

Some people in the community prepare puolos, packages containing ohelu [*sic*] berries (the fruit of Pele) and maybe some

other fruit. They wrap them up in ti leaves and give them to us to present in the ceremony.

We found out that we're supposed to share a drink with her [Pele], so we open the bottle of gin and take a sip and pass it around. Then we lower the bottle into the crater.

It's a revered thing. We feel her presence here. (Quoted in Fujii 1974)

In another interview Pelayo gave a different account of his encounters with Pele shortly after his arrival at his new job. During his first weeks at Volcano House, Pelayo was very busy and neglected to pay homage to Pele as he had been advised. One evening he was talking with the clerk at the front desk and suddenly

caught the strong, sweet scent of Maile, the vine used to make a lei for personages of high office. The scent permeated the hotel, and was noticed by other staff members. The clerk said: "She's coming to visit us, Mr. Pelayo."

"Who is?" he asked.

"You know," the clerk said, and smiled.

The following morning Pelayo wrapped "a bottle of fine Bombay gin" in ti leaves and, accompanied by three friends, took it to Halemaumau crater. As he stood at the edge of the pit and dropped in the gin, a cloud of steam enveloped him even though there were no steam vents in the area. That night alone in his house after going to bed, he heard a door slam. Thinking the wind had banged the back door, which had no lock, he propped a chair against it. He returned to bed and again heard a door slam. Again he got up and discovered the front door still locked and the back door still propped shut, but he felt a presence in the house. Finally, he said aloud: "Madame Pele, . . . if you are here, I welcome you. Please bless my house." After a split-second hesitation, he added, "Please bless Volcano House, too." Pelayo then returned to bed and slept without incident. The following day, an eruption occurred, which brought many guests to Volcano House. Pelayo continued to make offerings of gin, money, *ohelo* berries, or flowers to Pele. When asked if he believed in Pele, he replied, "There's something to it" (Stone 1977:73-75).

Mullins writes of the difficulties a television crew had because they did not make the proper offerings of *ohelo* berries to Pele:

In early 1974, a segment of the popular *Hawaii Five-O* television series was being filmed on the Big Island. During the filming crew's entire stay they were plagued by rains which delayed production. . . . Honolulu's newspapers implied that production personnel might have incurred Pele's displeasure by inadvertent actions. It seems that some crew members had eaten *ohelo* berries without first offering some to Pele, and had gathered up souvenir pieces of lava from a recent eruption flow. Either of these actions was enough to anger the goddess according to believers. (Mullins 1977:8)

A young Caucasian professor at the University of Hawaii told me of offerings she had made to Pele in 1975:

While in Berkeley working on her Ph.D. dissertation with tapes of Hawaiian children's stories, the informant sensed the presence of someone else in the room. When she returned to Hawaii to defend her dissertation, she told her advisor of her experience. The advisor suggested that the presence was Pele and that she wanted the voices of the children returned to Hawaii. Instead of returning the tapes, the informant decided to give offerings to Pele when she went to Kilauea two days later. She did so and apparently appeased Pele. Also, while there, she made offerings of dried fish to Pele to ask for success in her dissertation defense. She later successfully passed her defense. (Nimmo 1976)

A ceremony with a different twist was held at Kilauea crater on 30 December 1975. A small group of Christians met to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Queen Kapiolani's renunciation of Pele and "to recall the believed triumph of the Christian god over the heathen one." That same night, a long-dormant volcano erupted, the first time in historic times in that particular area (Apple and Apple 1975). In 1976, at the time of a persistent flow toward Hilo, Sammy Amalu suggested that "a couple of bottles of gin, a box of Havana's best, and maybe a sprig of old *ohelo* berries" would be suitable offerings for diverting the flow.

Several stories that I personally collected in Hawaii reveal a popular belief that Pele has developed a special taste for pork in recent years. In 1962 a Filipino man from Hilo told me that when driving the road between Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa one should not carry pork in the car. The pork attracts Pele who causes the car to malfunction until the

meat is thrown out to her (Nimmo 1962). As previously noted, the dog that has come to be associated with Pele has also developed a taste for pork (Nimmo 1976). In 1975 a Hawaiian man told me that when he was in high school, he and his friends were driving along the Pali road on Oahu with pork in their car. As they approached the summit the car stalled as a result of, he believed, Pele's interference. As soon as headlights from a car behind them appeared, the car started. According to the informant, if they had wrapped the pork in ti leaf, there would have been no problem (Nimmo 1976).

According to one writer, Pele does not like footprints in her volcanic sands. Consequently, it is best to walk on trails or smooth, hard lava while in the volcano area. The same writer claims that suitable offerings to the goddess are *ohelo* berries, money, gin, *kalua* pig, taro, breadfruit, or yams. Ideally, these gifts should be wrapped in ti leaves, but unwrapped gifts are also suitable (Apple and Apple 1977).

Apple claims that the *lehua* flower is not used by volcano area residents for leis, Christmas wreaths, or other purposes because it is traditionally believed to be associated with Pele and can be picked only with her permission or for offerings to her (Apple 1982a). Apple (1982d) also reports that a young Hawaiian man dressed in a white *malo* (loin cloth) was seen performing a ritual for Pele in the early morning at a steam vent in the volcano area:

Now properly dressed--and in bare feet--the Hawaiian approached the largest and densest vent. He chanted and gestured to the Hawaiian volcano goddess Pele. He addressed Pele in the water vapor.

To him, the steam took him close to the goddess, who makes her home in the Kilauea crater.

He may have left a *ho'okupu*, an offering, during his time at the vent. If so, it was not seen.

One of the first twentieth century accounts of a woman claiming special influence over Pele occurs in 1931 in a brief story in the *Honolulu Advertiser*.

Ancient rites in honor of Madame Pele, goddess of Kilauea, will be performed on the brink of Halemaumau this week by an aged Hawaiian sorceress, so she claims, to revive activity in the crater. . . . the aged woman says she is personally acquainted with the goddess and is almost one hundred years old.

. . . Later, when the volcano has erupted, the aged woman says she will ask Pele to stop the eruption.

No follow-up story describes the rites, if indeed they were ever conducted.

In recent years, Mrs. Leatrice Ballesteros of Waipahu on the island of Oahu has helped to keep Pele in the public eye. When eruptions occur, Mrs. Ballesteros goes to the Big Island dressed entirely in red to make offerings to Pele. One of the first accounts of Mrs. Ballesteros was written by Bob Krauss in 1965 when he saw her at an eruption:

Then I saw the Lady in Red.

She was leaning across the rail, talking to herself. I edged closer to listen.

"Up, up! Higher. Yes, higher," she said softly.

"Let us see how beautiful you are. Up, come up. Come up!"

This was Mrs. Leatrice Ballesteros, of Waipahu, Oahu, the woman who worships Pele, Hawaiian Goddess of the Volcano.

I had seen Mrs. Ballesteros at other eruptions but never under quite such dramatic circumstances.

She reached into a paper bag, clutching something in one hand, and threw it into the crater.

"What do you have in the sack?" I asked.

The Lady in Red looked up and recognized me with no particular pleasure. "I cannot tell you," she said. "These are my gifts to Pele. My gifts are a secret."

"I heard you talking to her. What did you say?"

"I asked her to come back so I could see her and she did."

By this time other volcano-watchers were crowding around to listen, some grinning, some serious.

One of them quipped: "So you caused this eruption?"

Mrs. Ballesteros nodded. Then she told this story:

Usually she catches the first Hawaiian Airlines plane to Hilo when the volcano erupts. This time she was not able to "on account of I had to wait for my son to get off work at the service station to take me to the airport."

She arrived with her gifts and another Pele disciple, William Rodrigues, also of Waipahu, at about 9 p.m., two hours and forty minutes after the eruption in Makaopuhi had gone dead.

"Madam Pele was *huhu* because I did not come right away," explained the Lady in Red.

To placate the sulking Fire Goddess, the Lady in Red began



an all-night prayer vigil beside the silent volcano. At 1 a.m., she said, she managed to bring about a little movement in the lava lake at the bottom of the crater.

But Pele still refused to come out of hiding.

While she was praying, Mrs. Ballesteros took time out to bless Mr. Rodrigues so that his shoulder, recently operated on, would heal rapidly.

The Lady in Red continued praying. But by mid-morning, she began to worry. She was to return to Oahu on a 2 p.m. flight.

"I went out and got some more gifts," she said. "Then I came back and asked Pele to forgive me because I could not come sooner. I told her the people all want to see her. I begged her to show her beauty again today. Finally, she did. (Krauss 1965)

A photo of a woman standing near a lava flow, dressed in a red muumuu with red shoes and a red purse, appears in Scott Stone's book *Volcano!!* The caption reads simply: "LADY IN RED making offerings to Pele at Alioi Crater" (Stone 1977:8). Possibly this is Mrs. Ballesteros.

In 1982 Mrs. Ballesteros was interviewed on the nationally televised program *Real People*. She said that Pele appeared before her during Aloha Week, an annual celebration of Hawaiian culture in the islands. She was wearing a white muumuu with lavender print and walked with a cane. She was old and had long white hair. Mrs. Ballesteros claimed that she was able to bring about some cures for various ailments through her contacts with Pele and, consequently, many people in Hawaii sought her services. A segment of the interview showed her at Kilauea offering a *maile* lei to Pele.

During a 1983 eruption, Mrs. Ballesteros, dressed in her red *holoku* with red flowers in her hair, offered a bottle of gin and *kalua* pig to Pele. She claimed the goddess was erupting because she was angry and hungry (*Sunday Star-Bulletin and Advertiser* 1983). In 1984 a story in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* featured an interview with Mrs. Ballesteros (Dingeman 1984). According to the writer, for almost thirty-five years Mrs. Ballesteros has given offerings of gin and whiskey as well as Hawaiian and Japanese food to Pele. At the time of an eruption, she dresses in red and flies to the island of Hawaii where she hires a small plane to fly her over the lava flow. As the plane circles, she says prayers and makes offerings. Mrs. Ballesteros, seventy-six years old at the time of the interview, considers herself a healer: "I'm happy because maybe I serve God and Madame Pele."

Ballesteros said people come to her in Waipahu for help with headaches and other aches and pains. Often she finds they have taken something from the volcano area that they must return. After they return the stone or whatever they have taken, the pain disappears, she said.

She said she can sense when Pele is about to create an eruption. This time, she felt an itchy rash break out over her arms on Saturday night. By yesterday morning, she received official word of the eruption. (Dingeman 1984)

Mrs. Ballesteros says that sometimes Pele appears as an old woman and at other times as a beautiful young girl. She considers Pele her mother and claims the goddess has visited her home numerous times. She always leaves behind a damp towel in the shower room after she has made a visit. Mrs. Ballesteros claims that no matter how hard she tries, she is never able to look at Pele's feet. She has become somewhat of a local celebrity since her appearance on *Real People*, and recently has done television commercials for a local airline (Dingeman 1984).

### **Pele's Non-Traditional Roles**

As noted in this paper, many of the traditional attributes and concerns of Pele have continued unbroken from her pre-European past, but the goddess has also assumed new functions in contemporary Hawaii, and has become involved in domains that were traditionally of no concern to her. Some of these new activities have been assigned to her by immigrant groups, such as the hitchhiking story, which apparently came to Hawaii from the mainland United States (Luomala 1972), while other activities were the concern of Hawaiian gods who disappeared with Christianity, but whose attributes and functions were transferred to Pele. But most of the new Pele stories appear unrelated to other traditions and reflect the creativity of contemporary Hawaiian culture, which has kept the Pele lore alive and growing.

A tragedy occurred in late 1935 that served to reinforce the traditional belief in Pele's power and anger. A lava flow was moving down the mountainside toward Hilo. Many attempts were made to divert it, since, if left uninterrupted, it would probably have reached Hilo. Finally, it was decided to bomb the flow in hopes of diverting it. Pele believers warned against it, fearing that it would only serve to anger the goddess to further destruction. Nonetheless, the plan was carried out. Planes from Oahu flew to Hawaii and successfully diverted the flow

with bombs. Pele watchers predicted revenge from the goddess even though she seemed to have been overpowered by the bombs. Less than a month later on Oahu, two planes collided in the air. Six men aboard who had participated in the bombing of the lava flow were killed; two who had not participated in the bombing were able to bail out to safety. The dead men's ashes were shipped to the Mainland, but when the ship arrived the ashes of one were missing. Pele believers attributed the deaths and the missing ashes to Pele's revenge (Mellen 1963).

Von Tempski (1937) tells a story set in the Kau District on the Big Island. A retired U.S. naval officer bought a parcel of land in Kau which he planted in beautiful gardens. The gardens prospered and seemed protected from Pele's lava, since each time an eruption occurred, no lava flowed onto them. When the gardens were completed, the retired officer decided to construct a more elegant home. During the course of excavation for the house, a stone idol of Kamapua'a, the Hawaiian pig-god and traditional rival of Pele, was found. Native workmen told the retired officer that the idol should be taken from the land and placed in a special temple, otherwise Pele would resent it and destroy it with lava. The old man dismissed the Hawaiians' concern as superstition that had no scientific basis, and placed the idol in a conspicuous place in his garden. Shortly thereafter, an eruption occurred, and part of the old man's land was inundated with lava. His workers told him it was because of the idol in his garden, but he became even more adamantly opposed to getting rid of it, stubbornly clinging to his contention that the belief was sheer nonsense and that the flow on his land was mere coincidence. Again an eruption occurred, and more of his land was covered by lava. This continued for several eruptions, each time more and more of his land being lost to the lava flows. Hawaiian workers, especially his foreman, continued to tell him he must get rid of the idol before all his land was taken by Pele. He continued his adamant refusal. Then a spectacular eruption began on the slopes of Mauna Loa. After a few days, it became evident that the flow was headed directly for the old man's house. His workers and neighbors pleaded with him to leave with them, but he would not. Only his foreman stayed with him. Finally, when it became evident that the old man was ready to die in the lava, the foreman left. The lava flow continued and to outside observers it seemed to have engulfed the old man's house. A few days later when the lava was hard enough to walk upon, the foreman and others walked to the old man's residence. They were surprised to find the house intact. Miraculously, the flow had divided some short distance above the man's home, gone around it, and rejoined beneath it, to leave the home and

gardens an island in the lava wastes. The old man was stubbornly sitting inside his house. He glared at the foreman when he came in. The foreman said: "I had no choice. To save your life, when I left, I took Kamapua'a's image with me and placed it in the Heiau!" The story draws upon the traditional enmity of Pele and Kamapua'a but its main message is that Pele cannot be dismissed as superstition. Many other stories told in Hawaii carry that same message.

The literature on Pele abounds with stories of her appearances before the volcanic eruptions, but in 1946, her prophetic appearance occurred before the tidal wave that took many lives and much property throughout the Hawaiian Islands that year. On Kauai, the island hardest hit, a Portuguese truck driver was driving along a rural road. He noticed a young schoolgirl hitchhiking. He stopped to pick her up, and she asked him to drop her off at a particular spot. As they were driving along, she told him that she knew him, but would not tell him her name. She added that she would tell him her name the next time she saw him. They approached a hairpin curve that demanded the driver's full attention for several minutes. When he again turned toward the young girl, he was amazed to find that she had disappeared from the cab. In retrospect, the driver believed her to be Pele appearing as a warning that the tidal wave was coming (Fern 1946; Hardy 1946). Many traditional and modern stories attribute earthquake activity to Pele, but this is one of the few accounts that associate her with tidal waves. In fact, traditionally, she regarded the sea as her enemy and avoided contact with it (Beckwith 1940).

In 1955 Dr. Dai Yen Chang recalled an incident with Pele that occurred in the winter of 1931. It, too, does not fit the traditional mold of Pele stories. Chang was on a hunting trip with friends on the island of Hawaii. After lunch one day the group split up and each hunted alone. While walking through a scrub forest area near Keamoku, Chang sat on a rock to rest. About seventy-five yards before him was a large pile of rocks which "started to wave gently like the swing of palms." He first thought of an earthquake, but only the rocks were moving and none of the surrounding area. He walked toward the rocks, and they stopped moving. Then another mound of rocks some distance away began to move. At this time, he began to think that Pele might be responsible so he said aloud: "If it is you, Madame Pele, I wish to pay my respects and humbly request that you reveal yourself. I have always tried to be good to your people." Again, when he walked to the pile of rocks, it stopped waving. He remained in the area for about a half hour waiting for something to happen, but when nothing did, he got in his car and started down the road to rejoin his friends. He heard the sound of a car

following him, but when he turned to look there was nothing behind him. When he arrived at the camp his friends were not there yet, so he decided to collect firewood for the night's fire. As he went about his job he could hear sounds of someone else doing the same sort of work, but he could see no one. After his friends joined him, there were no further incidents. His friends disbelieved his story, but when he told a Hawaiian woman of the incident about a year later, she told him that it certainly was Pele (Chang 1955).

In February of 1955 a bizarre incident on the Big Island caught the imagination of the press. A tourist and his wife were driving on the Saddle Road between Hilo and Kona. They stopped at one point to take photographs. They got back in the car, put it in neutral, and released the brakes, but the car began to roll backward up the incline. The man stopped the car by putting on the brake, but when he released it, the car again rolled uphill. Local people attributed the event to Pele, a warning that the volcanoes were about to erupt. The news story relates accounts of similar strange phenomena that happened prior to eruptions: "And a few weeks before the 1934 eruption Big Island drivers reported a rash of flat tires in out-of-the-way places. This was the time, too, that a Hawaii National Park Ranger fell into a deep hole in Kilauea crater and was rescued by an old lady" (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1955). An enterprising reporter at the *Advertiser* decided to capitalize on the automobile that coasted uphill, and organized a group of people on Oahu to go to the Big Island and drive to the area to test the claim of the tourist couple. After much fanfare and several news stories, they arrived at the place, but to their disappointment their car refused to roll uphill.

In 1979, Pele acquired a namesake. Largely due to the influence of an astronomer at the University of Hawaii Institute for Astronomy, a newly discovered volcano on the planet Jupiter (and the largest known to science) was named after Pele (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1979; Kaser 1979).

Pele apparently does not welcome academic investigations into her personal affairs. A young Hawaiian man told me that a graduate student at the University of Hawaii started an M.A. thesis on Pele, but abandoned the project when all sorts of misfortunes began to occur. Within days after giving up the thesis topic, her life returned to normal (Nimmo 1983).

Some believe that an underground oven (*imu*) will not function properly without Pele's blessing. According to a beachboy on Maui,

An *imu* without Pele's blessing won't hold heat. A *haole* woman fresh from the mainland put an *imu* in her backyard. It

just wouldn't roast pig no matter how many hot rocks she put in it.

Sam Mia came over and put some flowers and gin in it. Talked to Pele. Now it cooks like a microwave. I'm telling you. (Quoted in Delaplane 1984)

Within the past few years Pele has grown in importance as goddess of the hula. She was always an important ingredient in the lore of the dance since her younger sister, Hiiaka, was believed to have danced the first hula. Although many of the traditional hula chants deal with Pele, the chief goddess of the hula in traditional Hawaii was Laka. Like most of the traditional deities of Hawaii, however, Laka has declined over the years while belief in Pele has grown. Today, many *halau* (hula schools) journey to the volcano area to perform rites and present offerings to Pele before important performances--especially before the Merrie Monarch hula contest held annually in Hilo. Jerry Hopkins describes one such event: "One by one *halau* walked across the lava in the first light of dawn, to dance on the lip of Pele's firepit. They made offerings of berries and bananas and gin. The dancers sought Pele's blessings that their steps in the contest be perfect, their hearts pure" (Hopkins 1982:125). Mapuana de Silva, whose *halau* won the Merrie Monarch contest in 1983, described ceremonies that her group held on the Big Island after winning:

At Puu Pua'i, the entire *halau* is together, even the *keiki*. Everybody performs--and they're all Pele's numbers. . . . And then finally we go to Halemaumau. Each weaves leis that they can give to (the goddess) Pele and Hiiaka, to the fire of inspiration, the spark that's within each of us. I go to the edge with selected people. And I offer what we have to give. (Quoted in Bowman 1984).

Throughout most of this century, the press has referred to Pele as "Madame Pele," a title of respect widely used in the islands. In recent years, however, the title "Tutu," an affectionate term usually translated as "grandmother," has been used by some writers (e.g. Apple and Apple 1980; Apple 1982b, 1982c; Lysterly 1983; *Sunday Star-Bulletin and Advertiser* 1983) in reference to Pele. Several people told me that the term is too familiar and endearing for Pele and does not have the formality and distance that the goddess demands (Nimmo 1983). Only time will tell whether or not the term becomes established as a suitable title for Pele.

In many ways Pele has become a more benevolent goddess in recent years. Many believers say she will not take human lives, but only warns them of their affront to her through her eruptions. This was not the case of Pele in the past. Many traditional stories tell of her destroying persons by pouring lava over them or turning them into pillars of lava rock. She became important to the great chief Kamehameha when one of her eruptions released poisonous gases and ashes that killed a portion of his enemy's army (Beckwith 1940). During this century, occasional deaths have been attributed to her--most noteworthy perhaps were the bombadiers who diverted her flow near Hilo in 1935--but only one documented death has occurred at the volcanoes. In 1924 a tourist visiting the volcano area during an eruption did not heed the warning to stay away from certain areas. During a violent explosion a large rock fell on him, killing him instantly (Gessler 1937: 230).

The belief is growing in Hawaii that Pele brings misfortune to those who carry bits of her lava or sand away from the Hawaiian Islands as souvenirs. A 1974 news story reports that each day the Volcano House receives parcels from all over the world containing bits of lava and black sand, with notes requesting that the items be returned to Pele in the traditional manner (Fujii 1974). Three persons I talked to in Hawaii believed that misfortunes would occur to those taking Pele's materials. One claimed that lava could not be removed from the island of Hawaii without risk, while the others said it could be taken anywhere in the Hawaiian Islands, but not elsewhere. A Filipino man told me there were many cases of people dying or becoming ill because they took lava to the mainland United States, but the tourist industries have been successful in hushing up the stories because they were afraid it would harm their sales of the many souvenir items made of lava (Nimmo 1976).

In 1976, a package arrived in the Kona post office addressed to "The Mayor, Kona, Hawaii, U.S.A." with a California return address. On the back of the package were the instructions: "Return to Volcano Pele." Inside were nine pieces of lava wrapped in tissue paper (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1976). Two years later, a family from Buffalo, New York, suffered a series of misfortunes they attributed to taking lava rocks. They subsequently sent them back to Hawaii. When more bad luck followed, they discovered additional lava rocks they had overlooked; they immediately returned them in the hope that their luck would improve (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1978).

A driver reportedly stopped in the volcano area to pick up some lava rocks, which he placed in his car. When he returned to his car, it would not start. Only after he replaced the lava was he able to start his car and leave the area (Martin 1980). And as noted earlier, the film crew of

*Hawaii Five-O* pocketed small pieces of souvenir lava while on the Big Island; the heavy rains that halted filming for several days were, some believed, the result (Martin 1980).

People who take lava rocks from Haleakala on Maui also apparently suffer misfortune. "Supervisor Adele Fevella says she tells visitors [at Haleakala] Pele is protective of her rocks and bad luck will befall anyone taking a rock. Fevella says she receives rocks in the mail almost daily, sent back by individuals who took them. The rocks often are accompanied with notes telling stories of accidents or other ill happenings" (Tanji 1985). After a bout of bad luck an Oahu man returned by mail one of two rocks he had taken from the volcano area. The other rock had been taken to Alaska and lost by his son, which concerned him. A park ranger advised him to send an offering to Pele to be placed on a ledge near the volcano. The man sent the offering and the ranger placed it on a ledge for Pele (Nakao 1985).

Pele apparently does not mind if her fire is taken from the islands. In April 1964 a special torch called the "Eternal Flame of Pele" was lighted at a volcano on Hawaii, blessed by Rev. Kaipō Kuamoo, and given to a young Hawaiian man to take to New York City, where it was to burn for the two years of Hawaii's participation in the World's Fair. Apparently all went well--at least no further mention of the incident was made in the media (*Sunday Star-Bulletin and Advertiser* 1964).

Hawaiian tradition has always maintained that Pele needs no special reason for occasionally erupting lava from her crater home, although invariably tradition and contemporary imagination provide such reasons. A recurring explanation for Pele's eruptions in recent years is the probing by scientists and other newcomers into her volcanoes. In addition, some of the changes in modern Hawaii have allegedly upset Pele and caused her to overflow.

Benyas reports that in 1926 an explanation for a recent, violent eruption at Kilauea was that Pele was angry at the probing made by volcanologists to measure the temperature of the volcano (Benyas 1927). More recent accounts also reveal local belief that Pele does not like scientific probing of her domain. In a story discussing proposals to tap the energy of Hawaii's volcanoes for electrical power, the staid *Wall Street Journal* noted the local belief that Pele does not want scientific tampering in her environs and will react with eruptions if so disturbed. A geologist is quoted saying "Maybe they're right" (Immel 1975).

In 1976 Sammy Amalu cautioned against plans to divert lava flows from Hilo with the use of explosives. He claimed that such attempts



would only anger Pele and perhaps cause her to do even greater damage. Besides, he maintained, Hilo is "traditionally under her divine protection" (Amalu 1976). In October 1977 a lava flow threatened the village of Kalapana. Suggestions to divert the flow by explosives were rejected by the "chief scientist at the observatory atop Kilauea" because of Hawaiian sentiment. He is quoted as saying, "They feel Madame Pele, the goddess of the volcano, will do what she will do, and you offend her by trying to get around it" (*San Francisco Chronicle* 1977). In 1978, at a hearing held on Hawaii regarding a proposed lava control study, several speakers representing the local population voiced the sentiment that there was no way modern technology could hope to control Pele. One speaker said: "If Pele is gonna come, she come. But if you have done nothing wrong, there is nothing to be afraid of" (Clark 1978).

Recent plans to tap the volcano area for geothermal energy have brought outcries from several different factions in Hawaii, one being the Pele believers. The general feeling is that such probing is a sacrilege to Pele and she will respond with anger and destruction. Not coincidentally, say believers, volcanic eruptions occurred in early 1984 in those areas where geothermal drilling was planned (Nimmo 1984; Frederick 1984). A 1983 letter to the *Honolulu Advertiser* claims that recent volcanic eruptions were Pele's reactions to plans for developing geothermal energy (Belsky 1983a, 1983b). Another letter to the same paper maintains that the two accidents associated with the project, as well as a "harmful sulfur cloud" are evidence of Pele's displeasure (Lyerly 1983). A 1984 letter by the same writer in opposition to the project concludes, "Look whoever you are, lay off Tutu Pele!" (Lyerly 1984).

Contrary to general belief, a Caucasian man told me that one of the engineers involved in the project had told him that the eruptions were a sign of approval from Pele (Nimmo 1983). Still another view was offered by Amalu, who felt that project directors need not fear any wrath from Pele if they made proper offerings of gin, tobacco, and *ohelo* berries, since the lands are owned by the estates of Hawaiian families who are direct descendants of Pele (Amalu 1983). This view echoes the belief that Pele does not harm her own people.

A story about a hearing on the Big Island to discuss the possibility of establishing a geothermal project near Hawaii Volcanoes National Park appeared in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* in April 1984. The attorney for the community association opposed to the project said: "Pele will have the last word. She will be our final witness" (Whitten 1984).

Pele sometimes reacts to intrusions on her territory by *not* erupting.

In the 1940s two pit toilets were placed on land that some local people claimed was sacred to Pele. A Hawaiian man maintained that Pele had not erupted because she was angry that her land had been desecrated by the toilets (Castro 1953:64).

Among the local explanations offered for Pele's rampage in 1959 were that she was angry because Hawaii had been granted statehood and "because her land is being covered with ugly cement and skyscrapers" (Taylor 1960a). Others claimed she was angry because flower growers on the Big Island were concentrating on the cultivation of orchids to the exclusion of *lehua*, the flower traditionally associated with Pele. Accordingly, she destroyed the orchid fields so that *lehua* could grow from the lava she deposited (Taylor 1960b). The persistence of a 1960 flow was explained by the fact that workers had tried to divert Pele's flow by earthen dams, and she had to remind them that she was not to be intimidated by such attempts (Engledow 1960).

Hawaii's volcano goddess has her own club, established by an admirer from San Francisco. In 1922 C. C. Moore, head of a San Francisco engineering company, visited Hawaii and toured the volcano area. During a speech to the Honolulu Ad Club, he was very enthusiastic about Kilauea Volcano and said that "a great opportunity for publicity was being neglected by failure to provide the visitor with a certificate, signed by a guide or some official, which could be carried home and shown to friends" (Mellen 1925). He suggested that an organization called "Order of Kilauea" be established, whose members would be all those with such certificates. To get the project started, he subscribed one hundred dollars for organizational costs. The Honolulu Ad Club was receptive to the suggestion and established a committee to pursue the project. In 1923 Pele's fan club was established. The name decided upon was "Hui o Pele Hawaii," and a special membership certificate with the seal of Pele was designed. Two hundred charter memberships were sold at ten dollars each, and subsequent memberships were sold at one dollar. Of the two hundred charter memberships, ten were set aside for persons influential in establishing the organization or somehow importantly involved with the volcano.

Membership is granted only to one who has actually gazed into the pit called Halemaumau and made an offering to Pele. . . . Privilege of affiliation is extended, however, to include those who can establish proof of a visit prior to the formation of the *Hui*. (Mellen 1925)

The certificate indicates that an individual of a particular address

having visited the Volcano Kilauea, in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park on the Island of Hawaii, Hawaiian Islands, Territory of the United States of America, and having made offerings acceptable to Pele, Goddess of Volcanoes, at her fiery palace Halemaumau, which is called House of Everlasting Fire, is entitled to full active life membership in the Hui o Pele Hawaii, and is hereby granted all rights, privileges and benefits appertaining thereto. In testimony thereof we have caused the seal of our Realm to be affixed. (Quoted in Mellen 1925).

The seal of the organization is in the lower left-hand corner of the certificate, and it is "signed" in fire by Pele. After statehood the certificate was rewritten to bring that portion of the certificate up to date. Also, instead of "having made offerings acceptable to Pele" the certificate now reads "having seen from land, air or sea the manifestations of the power of Pele, Goddess of Volcanoes, such as live lava flows or her fiery palace" (Hui o Pele Hawaii 1975).

In 1925 membership in the organization had reached 1,024 (Mellen 1925). By 30 January 1929 the ranks had grown to 7,000, and excess funds had been used to make various improvements throughout the volcano park area (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1929). In 1951 Hui o Pele Hawaii administration was transferred to the Hawaii Visitors' Bureau. Membership had grown to "approximately thirty-five thousand members" and the organization had spent "over \$30,000 to the improvement and development of public conveniences in the Hawaii National Park" (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1951). Castro reported in 1953 that membership numbered "close to 40,000." Although I do not have access to current membership figures, they must be well in the hundred thousands, if not millions.

In 1934 Pele became the only female member of the Lions Club. The Lions were holding a meeting at Kona to celebrate the granting of charters for clubs in Kona and Hamakua. While members were singing a club song, an earthquake was felt. "Immediately a motion was made to extend membership to her [Pele]. It was approved" (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1934c).

In pre-European Hawaii, families who lived in the volcano districts of Hawaii, especially Kau and Puna, traced their ancestry to Pele. Rit-

uals were periodically conducted for her at her own *heiau*, and the bones of the deceased were sometimes thrown into the volcano pits in the belief that the spirit would reside there eternally with Pele and her entourage. To these families Pele was a deity to be appeased and who would, in return, protect them. Families living beyond the areas of volcanic activity were much less concerned with Pele. They had their own deities to worship, and although they doubtlessly knew much of the Pele lore and worshiped the goddess when she threatened their lands, she was not an important object of ritual concern. The Hawaiian people of the volcano areas of Hawaii have continued their close affinity to Pele. However, as a deity, she has become important to Hawaiians throughout the islands. Accompanying Pele's spread throughout the Hawaiian population is the belief that Pele will not harm Hawaiians, that she looks after her own people if they look after her.

In 1926 many Hawaiian residents of the village of Hoopuloa refused to leave as the lava approached their homes since they had made the proper sacrifices to Pele and believed Pele would not harm them. As the village homes began to go up in flames the diehard believers finally left, disappointed and bewildered that Pele had taken the homes of her people (Coll 1926; Maguire 1926; Thrum 1927). Benyas (1927) recounts a belief among Hawaiians that Pele will cure those Hawaiians who are faithful to her. A Hawaiian man told of his lame sister being cured after presenting charms to Pele at the brink of one of her craters. Von Tempski (1937) tells of an old man whose land seemed immune to Pele's ravages. Local belief held that Pele did not bother him because of his many kindnesses to the Hawaiian people. Franck notes that Pele always knows her own people and never harms them (1937). During a 1950 eruption residents of Kona claimed that Pele was angry because the City of Refuge at Honaunau, a pre-European temple complex, was being transferred from local hands to federal park authority. Pele was angry because the park belonged to her people, the Hawaiians (Rothwell 1950). As previously noted, when a Chinese man sensed the presence of Pele during a hunting trip in Hawaii, he said: "If it is you, Madame Pele, I wish to pay my respects and humbly request that you reveal yourself. I have always tried to be good to your people" (Chang 1955). He was voicing the belief that if you are good to Hawaiians, Pele will regard you favorably.

In 1955 a letter appeared in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* suggesting that Pele was currently erupting because of a proposal to sell lands of the Bishop Estate. The Bishop lands had been left by Bernice Pauahi Bishop in a trust to be used for the education of Hawaiian youth. The

letter writer claimed that Mrs. Bishop was a member of the Kamehameha family who had the special protection of Pele; Pele was angry that lands intended for Hawaiians' benefits were going to be sold (Irwin 1955). Lincoln (1959) claims that Pele appears only before "real Hawaiians" and that non-Hawaiians who say they have seen her should not be believed. Similarly, a 1965 news story claims that only persons of Hawaiian descent can see Pele (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1965). During a 1960 eruption, local people suggested that Pele destroyed Warm Springs, a beautiful pool, because it had not been properly used. "An eruption created the pool years ago, and, according to this legend, Pele ruled it should always be reserved for Hawaiians. Its use by everyone as a tourist attraction antagonized her and she took it back" (Engledow 1960).

Mellen (1963) reports that Pele is not always bent on destruction--especially toward Hawaiians. "Many Hawaiians report her assistance in times of stress. 'Even when she seems to be cruel, she is on our side,' say the old folks. She is their secret weapon. By means entirely satisfactory to themselves, her actions, both good and bad, can be so interpreted."

In the spring of 1968 an elderly Hawaiian woman called a radio talk show in Honolulu to tell how Pele once saved Hawaiians at South Point on the island of Hawaii. Some years ago a lava flow was headed toward South Point. Authorities told the Hawaiian people to leave the area because their lives were endangered. Instead, the Hawaiians put up signs telling Pele they were Hawaiian, her own people. Pele saw the signs and sent the flow around the community, leaving the Hawaiians unharmed (Nimmo 1968).

As noted earlier, Amalu claimed that Pele would not interfere with drilling for geothermal energy on the Big Island since the lands where the drilling would occur are owned by Hawaiian families who are direct descendants of the goddess (Amalu 1983).

Two residents of the Big Island swore on a notarized document that they had encountered "a beautiful woman on an isolated stretch of Saddle Road" "dressed in a green mu'umu'u with a red and white Ohia blossom over each ear." She told them that the eruptions were a warning that no one should try to hurt her people. She accepted hot coffee from them and told them that they would see an *akualele* (an omen, usually of misfortune) over the volcano that night. Then "quick as you can blink, she completely vanished." That night, shortly after midnight, an *akualele* appeared in the form of a fireball over the volcano (Frederick 1984).

Pele's benevolent protection is also occasionally extended to non-

Hawaiians, as evidenced by this story told to me by a young Caucasian woman:

Two young Caucasian women were hitch-hiking on Hawaii. They were picked up by a man and an old woman--both Hawaiians. Neither spoke as they drove through the night. Finally, the old woman told them that when they got out of the car, they should not accept a ride with two Hawaiian men in a pick-up truck. If they did so, they would be harmed. The old woman gave the young women her address in Kona in case they needed help. The young women got out and the Hawaiian couple drove on. Soon a pick-up truck came along and stopped to offer them a ride. In the truck were two sinister-looking Hawaiian men. The young women remembered the old woman's warning and refused the ride. The truck drove on. A few days later, the young women decided to look up the old woman at the address she gave them. They went to the village where the old woman was supposed to live, but could find nothing but an open field where the house should have been. A neighbor said she had never known any house to be located on the site. The young women assumed the old woman to be Pele. (Nimmo 1975)

Another story of Pele's benevolence is related by Russ Apple (1982c), although the ethnicity of the participants is not noted. In 1961 a woman who recently moved to Volcano on the Big Island was nervous about earthquakes and eruptions. One night she and her daughter awakened and noticed a "red fog" surrounding their house. They went downstairs and when they opened the front door the fog disappeared. "This was Pele's way of reassuring a nervous Volcano resident. The mother interpreted the experience as both a reassurance and a prediction of an eruption which would not harm her or her household." Two weeks later there was an eruption but no harm came to the household.

Pele has also revealed her concerns about political and economic problems in Hawaii. In 1960 the goddess appeared before Alice Kamokila Campbell and gave a well intended message to all the people of Hawaii. The message reported in a news story was "in part":

Affairs of state are in such a tangled mess that governmental organizations and departments must begin from new roots with less talk and more constructive action.

Finances in business, investment, property, food and transportation will prove costly and as a result great losses will occur. Those with cash during this period should hold firmly to their resources.

After making other similar observations and suggestions, for example too many valuable lands were going to waste and basic industries had to be preserved, Pele concluded: "Now that we are at the crisis of our destiny, are we to fall into oblivion?" (Quoted in *Honolulu Advertiser* 1960).

Stories on the Big Island in April of 1984 claimed that Pele was erupting to wipe out the "dope-growing" on the island; that she resented her name being used in "Operation Pele"--the federal-state-county operation to discourage use of the mail system for shipping out marijuana; and that she was "angry at our greed and punishing us for defacing the island" (Donham 1984).

Pele has found new expressions in the arts of contemporary Hawaii. Throughout this century the moods of the volcanoes and the goddess who resides within them have been interpreted by painters, poets, and other writers. The quality of these artistic endeavors varies widely, but none are truly outstanding and none rival the lovely lyrics found in some of the traditional *meles* about the goddess.

Probably the most famous poem written about Pele is the one by Alfred Tennyson, published in 1893. The poem, entitled "Kapiolani," was inspired by Kapiolani's visit to Kilauea and her rejection of Pele in the name of the Christian god. The poem is not one of Tennyson's better poems, but because of the poet's fame it is probably the best known of those about the volcano goddess. A poem by Sanford B. Dole, "An Appeal to Pele," is only sixteen lines and praises the beauty of the islands Pele has created, and asks why she continues to create more when the work she has done is so beautiful (Dole 1928). "Madame Pele's Return," a thirty-three line poem by George Ferreira, is an amateurish expression of the poet's delight in having Pele back in Halemaumau after a long absence of activity in the crater (Ferreira 1931). In 1949 a lyrical letter in praise of Pele was published in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. The poetic letter, written by a "comparative newcomer to Hawaii," supposedly reflects the attitude toward Pele of an eighty-year-old Hawaiian woman, one Maka Woolsey. The letter states that the woman is not frightened by Pele's eruptions and earthquakes, but rather acknowledges them as Pele's presence and power. She has always been devoted

to Pele, and always will be (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1949). An unsigned and untitled poem appears in an article by Mellen in 1962. Although the poem does not specifically mention Pele, it is quoted in the context of an article about Pele. The twelve line poem states that although "the gods of old Hawaii" are no longer evident, their presence can be sensed--they are not dead, they are but sleeping" (Mellen 1962). Jazz Belknap prefaced an article about Pele with an eight-line poem. The poem is simply a description of Pele: "a crimson hibiscus in her glossy black hair; tempestuous and fiery; eyes aflare." The article deals with the author's personal experiences during a volcanic eruption (Belknap 1967b). Two haiku, appearing in the "Hawaii Haiku" column of the *Honolulu Advertiser* in 1985, found inspiration from Pele:

Madame Pele stirs  
Fountain of fire sings old song,  
"Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." (Kish 1985)

Pele walks the roads.  
She is seen only at night  
And always alone. (Stroud 1985)

Countless paintings, sketches, and statues of Pele have been made. Probably the best known painting is the one that hangs in the Volcano House Museum, an oil painting of the goddess in the fire painted by Howard Hitchcock. Various murals throughout Hawaii depict the goddess. Hundreds of unsigned sketches have been made to accompany stories or items for the tourist industry. Some of the better depictions of Pele are probably those of Madge Tennet, a well-known painter of Hawaii.

The cover of the 1970 March issue of *Honolulu Magazine* features a portrait of Pele painted by Terry Metz, a local artist, several of whose paintings are inspired by Pele and her volcanic domain (*Honolulu Magazine* 1970). Volcano Art Center on the Big Island displayed nine paintings called the "Pele Series" by Gail Ka'uhane in April of 1984. The paintings were described as honoring "Pele in her basic forms, that of a young woman, an ancient crone, a white dog and as fire itself" (*Hawaii Tribune-Herald* 1984b).

The carved face of Pele over the fireplace at Volcano House is probably the best known statue of the goddess. Dozens of depictions of Pele formed in plaster of paris or hewn from lava rocks are found in the tourist shops of Hawaii. In all mediums, she is either depicted as an ethe-



real, beautiful young woman, or a withered, bent crone--her traditional guises.

Pele has not only inspired poets, painters, and sculptors over the years, but has also been the subject of short stories and plays. For the most part, the short stories are loose reinterpretations of traditional legends (e.g. Underhill 1926; Taylor 1929). An exception is a fictional account set in traditional Hawaii of a young Hawaiian man's visit to Pele as part of his initiation into manhood (Dygart 1978). Most of the plays are also reinterpretations of legends, such as those by Andrew Westervelt (1926) and Jean Charlot (1963). Pageants have periodically been staged in Hawaii based on the traditional legend of Pele, Hiiaka, and Lohiau (e.g. *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1964). In addition Hollywood, in its more naive years, borrowed aspects of the Pele legend for some of its South Seas movies about lovely native maidens and volcanoes. Most notable perhaps is *Bird of Paradise*, made in 1953. Pele also appears in James Michener's best-selling novel *Hawaii* (1959). One artist in Honolulu, however, feels that Pele is too sensitive a subject to deal with artistically. A Caucasian puppeteer who has lived in the islands some twenty years told me that she feels that many local people are too fearful of possible sacrilege to the goddess for her to use the Pele legends in her children's puppet theater (Nimmo 1983).

The lively recording industry in Hawaii has recorded Pele in her various aspects. Some recordings are retellings of the ancient legends of Hawaii (e.g. Kamokila, n.d.), some are ancient chants about the deity, and some are newly inspired songs about the woman of the volcanoes set to contemporary music (e.g. Cazimero 1979).

In 1960 a souvenir company introduced a line of candles fashioned in the image of Pele. Apparently the makers were concerned about offending the goddess for they called in "David K. Bray, Sr., Hawaiian priest . . . [to give] his blessing to the venture, and the enterprise was dedicated by the Reverend Ella Wyse Harrison" (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1960).

Pele has inspired other artistic expressions throughout the islands. Local political cartoonists occasionally find her relevant. For example, a cartoon appeared on the editorial page of the *Honolulu Advertiser* in April 1984 depicting Pele holding an Oscar. At the base of the Oscar are the words "To Madam Pele for Special Effects." The preceding year had been one of much volcanic activity on the Big Island (*Honolulu Advertiser* 1984). Menus throughout the islands feature various cocktails named after the volcanic goddess, with editorial promises of exotic volcanic and tropical delights to the imbiber. Artists invited to decorate the walls

of construction sites in Honolulu sometimes offer their interpretation of Pele. Pele's name sometimes appears in graffiti on public walls, such as one in a men's restroom at Volcano House: "I can get a really hot wahine for you--her name is Pele!" (Nimmo 1976). Souvenir shops, catering to Hawaii's tourist traffic, feature Pele momentos including earrings, statuettes, paintings, posters, stationery, postcards, ash trays, muddlers, dishes, napkins, and charm bracelets.

### **Conclusion**

The range and variety of the Pele legend in contemporary Hawaii is great. The goddess may appear as a beautiful young woman, an ugly old hag, or a white dog. She may be a face in the volcanic flames, a hitchhiker on the road, a visitor to your home, or a chance encounter on a walk. She is sometimes vindictive, sometimes jealous, sometimes helpful, sometimes protective (especially if you are Hawaiian), and sometimes resentful of probings by Western technology. *Ohelo* berries make a proper offering to her, as do gin, tobacco, roast pig, *lehua* flowers, and money.

Pele is a significant ingredient in the culture of the contemporary Hawaiian Islands. Belief in the volcano goddess is widely held by a broad stratum of society--doctors, professors, scientists, writers, housewives, engineers, hotel managers, and countless others. Children in Hawaii are weaned on Pele stories and throughout their lives they hear of encounters with the goddess, see evidence of her wrath on the Big Island, and observe her periodic portrayal in island arts. One question inevitably intrudes into a discussion of the popularity of the volcano goddess: Why does Pele have such wide appeal to the people of Hawaii? I offer some of my own thoughts on the persistent appeal of the volcano goddess.

It is important to emphasize that the traditional belief in Pele as goddess of the volcanoes and special deity to Hawaiians in the volcano area is unbroken from the past. Some Hawaiians in Hawaii still worship her and respect her much as their ancestors did in pre-European Hawaii. Their present concern with Pele is the continuation of an ancient religious tradition.

A revitalization of traditional culture has occurred among the Hawaiians in recent years, as among many other ethnic minorities in the United States. Hawaiians, young and old, have looked to their past with new interest and new respect, attempting to recapture aspects of their culture lost to Westernization. They question the wisdom of their elders

in abandoning the old ways and accepting the customs of the various immigrant groups to Hawaii. One result has been a renewed interest in Hawaiian supernaturalism, a new look at certain supernatural claims or spirit-sightings, And, in this context, a new look at Pele as a goddess and protectress of the Hawaiian people.

Throughout the United States, beginning in the 1960s an interest in the occult and realms traditionally called "supernatural" has occurred. At the popular level it is manifested in the growing interest in astrology, Eastern schools of mysticism, the popularity of movies and television programs dealing with possession, witchcraft, and the occult. Professionals also have examined claims of "supernaturalism" through the more sober tools of their trade. Notable in anthropology are the controversial and popular writings of Carlos Castaneda, who has suggested that other levels of reality may be experienced if one has the cultural tools to do so (Castaneda 1968). This recent attitude toward and interest in the supernatural throughout the general United States has doubtless contributed to some of the present interest in Pele as deity of the volcanoes of Hawaii.

The volcanoes themselves cannot be overemphasized as important contributors to the belief in Pele. A volcanic eruption is one of the most powerful, spectacular displays of the forces of nature. And, although volcanologists have discovered the basic factors that cause volcanic eruptions, to the lay observer a volcanic eruption is still a terribly awesome event, somehow supernatural in its power and beauty. Even the dormant craters of Hawaii, oozing sulphuric-smelling steam and usually enshrouded by mists and fogs, seem of another reality. The ever-smoldering presence of the volcanoes and their periodic earthquakes and eruptions never fail to impress the visitor. Small wonder that many have called upon supernatural forces, such as Pele, to explain the wonders of volcanoes.

During the past century, the Hawaiian media has played an important role in keeping the Pele stories alive. In a very real sense, the press has become the storyteller of traditional Hawaiian tales. Periodically newspapers and magazines reprint stories from traditional Hawaiian mythology, and the most popular of these are the stories of Pele. As noted in the introduction, a discussion of these traditional Pele stories is beyond the scope of this paper, but their periodic appearance in the local press is doubtless important in perpetuating belief and interest in Pele. Pele-sightings before or during volcanic eruptions make good reading, and the press seemingly scours the islands at such times to find someone who has seen Pele, or even talked to the goddess. Stories of Pele

help sell newspapers and magazines, and therefore are peddled by the media to an interested public.

The tourist industry in Hawaii has obviously been an important factor in popularizing Pele, as well as other aspects of traditional Hawaiian culture. Beginning with the elaborate ceremony at Halemaumau in 1925 and the creation of the Hui o Pele Hawaii, down to the present posters, booklets, and souvenir trinkets of the goddess, Pele has been an important ingredient in the Hawaiiana peddled to visitors to the islands. A volcano goddess and sacrifices to her are the sort of exotic lore that tourists expect on a tropical holiday, and the Hawaii Visitors Bureau does not disappoint them.

Immigrant groups to Hawaii have been receptive to the Pele stories. As noted by Katharine Luomala (1972), people from the mainland United States and from Japan have added to the Pele lore. The rich folk traditions of the Filipinos, Koreans, Chinese, and other immigrants to Hawaii have proven receptive to the Pele tales, and the goddess is an important character in the oral traditions of these Hawaiian subcultures. They, too, perpetuate the deity.

Intensity of belief in Pele varies a great deal in Hawaii. Some disbelievers scoff at the stories, while others smile indulgently when they hear or read of someone having seen or talked to Pele. Many accept a more agnostic position, neither believing nor disbelieving, waiting to hear more about the goddess. For many, especially newcomers to the islands, it has become fashionable to express belief in Pele and to know someone who has had a supernatural encounter with the woman of the volcano. For others Pele is a fact of life--as are the tides, the volcanoes, the sun, the moon, and the stars. And for still others, Pele is an ancient deity who was worshiped by ancestors and who is still periodically approached and appeased.

But whatever the belief, Pele is a very real component of contemporary Hawaiian culture, and is likely to remain so for some time. As long as people are around to watch the Hawaiian volcanoes erupt, and perhaps long after they cease to erupt, stories of Pele will offer alternatives and elaborations to the explanations of volcanology.

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