

VIVIAN L. THOMPSON

HAWAIIAN MYTHS OF  
EARTH, SEA, AND SKY



ILLUSTRATED BY MARILYN KAHALEWAI

# HAWAIIAN MYTHS OF

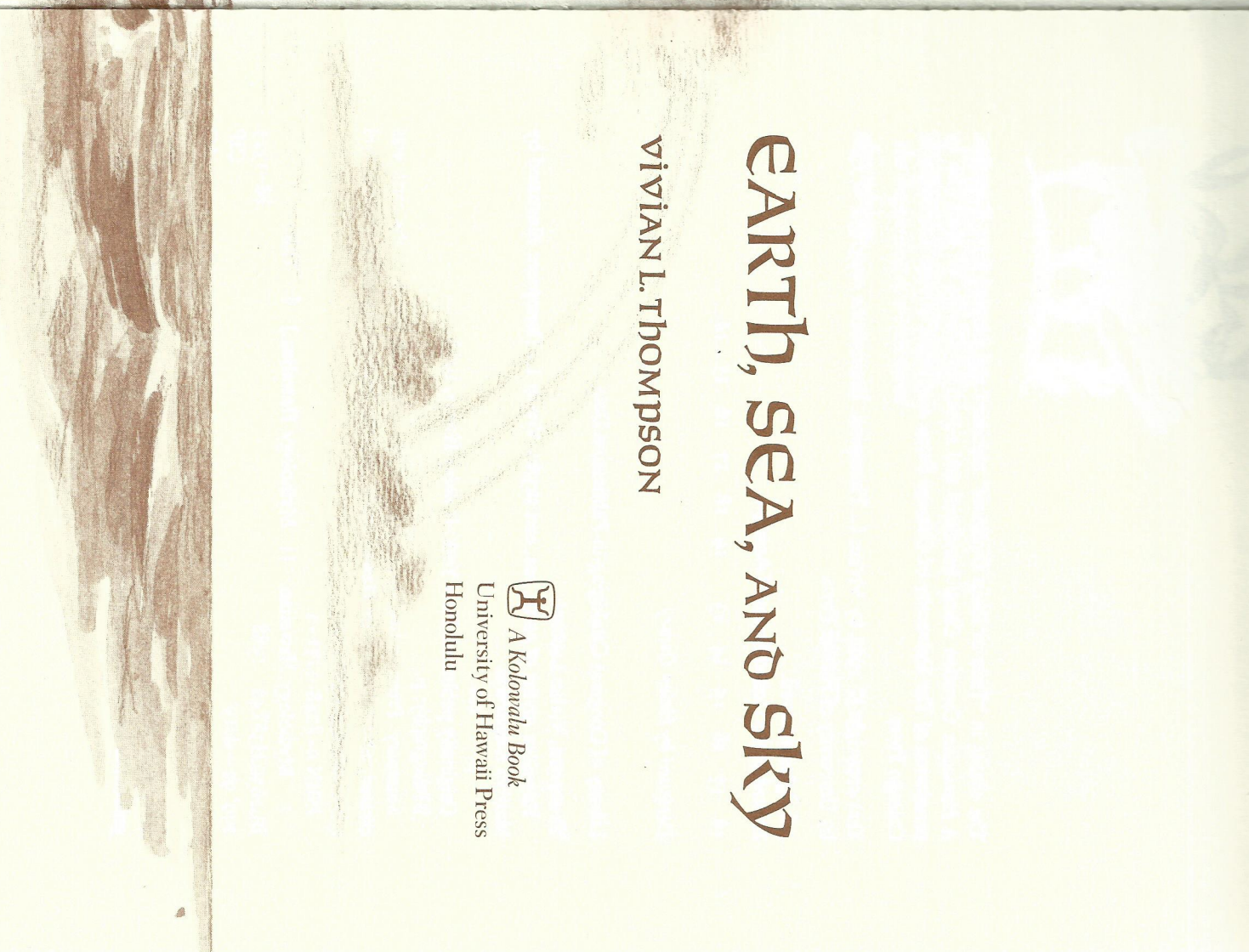
ILLUSTRATED BY MARILYN KAHALEWAI

# EARTH, SEA, AND SKY

VIVIAN L. THOMPSON



A *Kolowalu Book*  
University of Hawaii Press  
Honolulu





The chants in "Time of Deep Darkness" reprinted and adapted from *Kumulipo*,  
A *Hawaiian Creation Chant* translated and edited by Martha W. Beckwith by  
permission of The University of Chicago Press. Copyright © 1951 University of  
Chicago Press.

Text copyright © 1966 by Vivian L. Thompson. Illustrations copyright © 1988  
by University of Hawaii Press.

All rights reserved.  
Printed in the United States of America

18 17 16 15 14 13 19 18 17 16 15 14

*Designed by Helen Gentry*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Thompson, Vivian Laubach.  
Hawaiian myths of earth, sea, and sky/by Vivian L. Thompson; illustrated by  
Marilyn Kahalewai.

P. cm.

Originally published: New York: Holiday House, 1966.

Bibliography: P.

Summary: Presents twelve Hawaiian myths which explain how the earth was  
created, why volcanoes on Hawaii erupt, why the days are longer in summer, and  
other natural phenomena.

ISBN 0-8248-1171-2

1. Mythology, Hawaiian. [1. Mythology, Hawaiian.] I. Title.

BL2630.H38T46 1988

299'.92—dc19

88-1325

CIP

AC

University of Hawai'i Press books are printed on acid-free paper and meet the  
guidelines for permanence and durability of the Council on Library Resources

*To Jackie Johnson Debus  
because this book marked  
the beginning of a treasured  
friendship*



## SPEARS OF LIGHTNING

Demon-terrors lurked in the dark places of the island of Hawaii. It came about that Hiiaaka, the goddess of lightning, had to fight them with her weapon of light . . . .

THE YOUNG HIIAKA, left behind on Floating Island of the gods, was happy when the canoe returned and took her to join her sister Pele. The vast crater, Kilauea, filled Hiiaaka with awe, but the change in Pele saddened her. The goddess of the volcano had become a cruel, hot-tempered ruler. So Hiiaaka did not live with her, but in the district of Puna below Kilauea.

20

Her home was in a beautiful grove of lehua, the Tree-of-Fire-Bloom, that sprang up wherever the lava flows cooled. Here she met Hopoe, a graceful dancer, and the two became close friends. Together they made leis, or garlands, of feathery red lehua blossoms. Together they danced the sacred hulas.

As the goddess of lightning, Hiiaaka was equal in rank to her sister but, even so, the goddess of the volcano gave orders to her. Before long Pele told Hiiaaka to carry a message to the far end of the island. Hiiaaka had no wish for such a journey. Yet how could she refuse? She had begged Pele to bring her to Hawaii.

To her friend, Hopoe, the news was frightening. "This is a dangerous journey, Hiiaaka!" she said. "Many demons lie hidden in the shadows of forest, river, sea, and mountain. Let me go with you!"

Hiiaaka shook her head. "Pele has ordered Fern Maiden to be my companion. I shall not be gone long. I must return before Moon is born new again. Such is my sister's command."

Hopoe took off the lehua lei she wore and placed it about Hiiaaka's neck.

The young goddess smiled. "Do not be sad, Hopoe. Soon I shall dance again to the beat of your hula drum."

"May it be so," Hopoe answered.

"It will be so," said Hiiaaka. "Pele has promised to protect you and these lehua groves until I return."

MOON still hung in the sky next morning, when Hiiaaka rose. She put on her skirt of leaves and wrapped her magic pa-u about her, drawing the loose end up over her shoulder.

21

## Spears of Lightning

She and Fern Maiden set out. At the edge of a forest they met a young woman named Singing Thrush, who lived on the far side. She told them of Forest Demon who haunted these woods, and offered to guide them through.

As she led them into the forest gloom, chilling fog closed about them. Unseen roots tripped them. Thorny vines clawed at them. Sharp-billed birds darted at them.

"Fog, roots, vines, birds—all are Forest Demon's helpers," Singing Thrush said.

Ahead, a giant candlenut tree thrust its twisted branches toward them.

"That is no true tree!" Singing Thrush warned.

Fern Maiden cried, "Let us go back!"

Hiika said, "No. We shall go on."

"Not so!" roared a terrible voice.

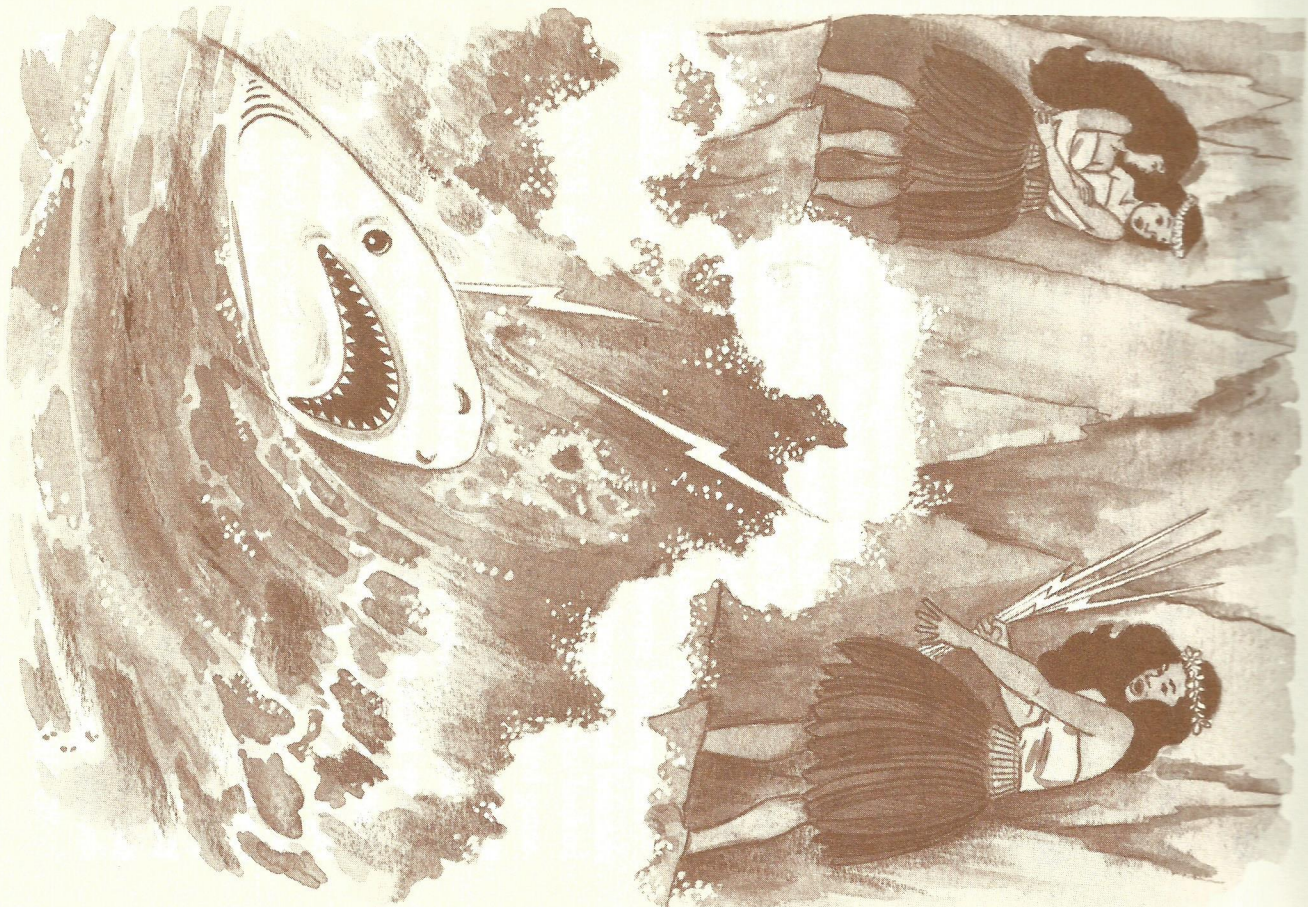
Through the drifting fog, a writhing shape came toward them. Lightning Goddess snatched off her pa-u and whirled it. A flash lighted the dark forest, and they saw the fearsome demon.

Lightning Goddess whirled her pa-u again. Lightning spears cut into Forest Demon and he died. The three young women passed safely through the woods.

MOON was rising and slender.

The three young women spent the night at Singing Thrush's home. She wished to go on with them next morning, and Hiika consented.

As Moon paled they were on their way. Before noon they came to a rushing river. At the crossing place two rough logs stretched



to the far shore. On a rock near the water travelers were placing gifts of fish, coconut, and fruits.

One said to Hiika, "If you would cross safely, make a large offering to Lizard Women."

The three maidens watched another traveler—an old woman—place a small offering on the rock. She hobbled to the crossing logs. As she set foot upon one of them, it curled up and seized her.

Hiika saw that the logs were tongues—the tongues of two monstrous creatures with witch heads and giant lizard bodies; Lizard Women. She pulled the old woman to safety. Lizard Women, with tongues and tails, then tried to drag Hiika into the churning water. The goddess whirled her pa-u. Lightning spears struck Lizard Women and turned them to stone.

The grateful travelers gave their food gifts to the goddess, and she and her companions went on their way.

THROUGH the growing large of Moon—eight nights and days—their path lay along the top of a seacoast cliff.

Fern Maiden's skill in finding food and shelter eased their weariness. Singing Thrush's songs kept up their spirits. But each night, as Hiika saw Moon grow larger, she wondered what her hot-tempered sister might do if she returned late.

One day their path ended, cut off by a wide break in the cliff. Below the sea surged and pounded. On the far side of this warty gap they saw their trail continue. Carefully they made their way down to a rocky shelf overlooking the sea.

"The day is warm, and the water inviting," said Fern Maiden.

"O Hiika, let us swim across," said Singing Thrush.

"Wait!" commanded the goddess. She broke a branch from a bush and tossed it down. The water swirled. The branch vanished in a flash of spray.

"Only a trick of the current," Singing Thrush said, and made ready to dive.

"Not so!" said Hiika. She dropped a cluster of leaves in a different spot. The ugly head of Man-Eater Shark rose from the water and snatched the leaves.

Lightning Goddess and the shark fought. He churned up waves powerful enough to sweep the women from their ledge. Fern Maiden and Singing Thrush drew back. The goddess hurled her spears of lightning into Man-Eater Shark until his lifeless body sank from sight.

MOON'S sharp horns were growing round. As Hiika looked at them that night, she knew her time was already one-third gone.

On they went until they came to mountains. There they met a young chief, who gave them food and shelter. He told them that his district was plagued by many mo-o. The chief and his warriors led the travelers on their way, up the winding trail of the mo-o. On one side the mountain stood, pitted with dark caves. On the other, the land dropped sharply away to a plain, far below.

Without warning, a gigantic lizard-like beast with mighty legs sprang from one of the dark caves. It was Great Mo-o. The chief and his men attacked him with their sharp spears. These did not pierce the tough hide. Angered, Great Mo-o sprang again. His lashing tail struck Fern Maiden to the ground. Singing Thrush knelt to care for her.

Lightning Goddess fought beside the warriors, hurling her lightning spears until Great Mo-o dropped in the trail, dying. The chief's men dragged the ugly body to the cliffside and flung it over.

Then from the cave swarmed hundreds of little mo-o: They sprang great distances. Warriors struck at the leaping creatures with war clubs, but each time one was killed, two more sprang to take his place.

Lightning Goddess began to call upon her brother and sister gods of the storm. She split the sky with lightning and flashed light into the dark caves. A mighty rain fell, sweeping the hordes of little mo-o to death on the plain below.



MOON had reached its roundness. There was no time to lose. Hiika left Fern Maiden with the chief's people to recover, while she and Singing Thrush finished their journey. They traveled swiftly to the seacoast, delivered Pele's message, and returned. The young chief told them he wished to marry Fern Maiden and Hiika gave her consent. He gave a great feast in honor of the goddess, to thank her for helping to rid his district of the mo-o.

MOON was moving to smallness as Hiika and Singing Thrush began their return journey. As they left the mountains of the mo-o behind, Moon showed sharp horns again. As they passed the sea

of Man-Eater Shark, Moon grew weak and wasted. As they crossed the river of Lizard Women, Moon drew his last breath. When they reached the home of Singing Thrush, night-of-no-Moon was upon them.

"O Hiika," said Singing Thrush, "with your lightning spears you have rid the island of the darkness-terrors. Now our people may travel without fear. But tonight you must eat and rest."

Hiika hesitated. Moon would not be born again until the next night, but she wished to be home early. If she should be late, her fiery sister would show no mercy. Yet if she went on tonight, she might lose her way in the dark forest. She decided to stay.

MORNING Star still burned in the sky when Lightning Goddess and Singing Thrush parted. Hiika hurried on. Before mid-morning, sulphur smoke burned her nostrils. Kilauea lay beyond the next bend. She moved swiftly, then stopped.

Her lehua grove was a smoking ruin. Lava from the fire pit of Kilauea still flowed across it. The hot-tempered volcano goddess had broken her promise.

But Hiika saw Hopoe standing on a ledge. She was in the lava's path, and Hiika ran toward her, calling her name.

Hopoe moved a little but did not answer. When the lightning goddess reached the ledge, she knew her friend would never speak again. Pele, instead of protecting Hopoe, had turned her to stone—a stone that swayed with every breeze.

From that time on Hopoe was known as the Dancing-Stone-of-Puna.