



## Disasters in Popular Cultures

Giovanni Gugg, Elisabetta Dall'Ò, Domenica Borriello (Eds.)

### ***Ka wahine 'ai honua, the woman who eats the land: an eco-anthropological analysis of the Pele's myth.***

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#### **Abstract**

In May 2018, the Kilauea, a volcano on the island of Hawai'i, obtained worldwide fame for a spectacular eruption; nevertheless, in the Aboriginal Hawaiian culture the Kilauea is not just a volcano, but the home of Pele, a goddess, informally called Tutu Pele (grandmother Pele). An eco-anthropological analysis of the myth of Pele allows us: 1) to interpret the *mo'olelo* (oral histories) as synopsis of the geological history of the territory and 2) to investigate the native population's cultural response to the prolonged cohabitation with a volcanic reality. The myth of Pele does not deal alone with the role of the divinity in a remote past, but it is a reminder, in the present, of the importance of the link between Kānaka Maoli and the land of Hawaii. The Aboriginal population confirms its ecological awareness in the relationship with, what Bruno Latour called, the non-human collective. It is precisely this relationality, which links the myth to the territory and places to stories, that shapes the ecological responsibility (*kuleana*) that today allows Kānaka Maoli, as it has allowed their ancestors in the past and the next generations in the future, to live a geological active reality.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Knowledge, mythology, Kānaka Maoli, ecological responsibility, socialization of nature.

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