

The Origin of Hawai'i Nei

IT IS SURPRISING how contradictory are the accounts given by *ka po'e kabiko* of the origin of the land in *Hawai'i nei*. The *mo'olelo* of the beginnings of the Hawaiian group and of Kahiki were not well kept, and the accounts of the people of much later times are contradictory. Here let us see the accuracy of some people and the errors of others.

In the genealogy of Puanue, it is said, by those who kept it very sketchily, that Kumu-kani-ke-ka'a gave birth to the "borders" of the earth and of the sky, the *kūkulu o ka honua*, *kūkulu o ka lani*. Kumu-kani-ke-ka'a was the wife, and Paialani the husband. Others say that Kamai'eli gave birth to the taproot, the *mole*, of the earth. Hālōiho-i-lalo was another name for this woman, and Kumuhonua was the name of her husband.

In the Kumulipo genealogy, it is said that the earth and the heavens simply grew.

In the genealogy of Wākea, it is said that his wife Papa gave birth to the islands and so was called Papa-nui-hānau-moku, Great-Papa-who-gave-birth-to-islands.¹

It was thus that Papa gave birth: she gave birth to a gourd, a calabash with its cover, *he 'umeke a he po'i*; Wākea threw the cover up, and it became the sky; then Wākea threw out the inner core, *ka haku oloko*, and it became the sun; as he threw it up, the seeds became stars. Wākea saw the whiteness of the soft core, the *pala haku*, of the gourd and threw that up, and it became the moon; the white layer, *papa ke'oke'o*, of the gourd Wākea scraped and threw up into space and it became clouds; the juice of the gourd he poured into the clouds, and it became rain. The calabash from the separation of the gourd by Wākea became land and ocean.²

Here is the reason for erroneous ideas: Later generations followed the chants composed by the *po'e kabiko* as if they were completely true. Some of them were, however, composed in the style, *'ano*, of [naming] the most important of the children and the most important of the wives (*ma ke 'ano loina o ka nui o nā keiki, a me ka nui o nā wahine*).