PUNA AND THE DRAGON

TWO images of goddesses were clothed in yellow kapa cloth and worshipped in the temples. One was Kiha-wahine, a noted dragon-goddess, and the other was Haumea, who was also known as Papa, the wife of Wakea, a great ancestor-god among the Polynesians.

Haumea is said to have taken as her husband, Puna, a chief of Oahu. He and his people were going around the island. The surf was not very good, and they wanted to find a better place. At last they found a fine surf-place where a beautiful woman was floating on the sea.

She called to Puna, "This is not a good place for surf." He asked, "Where is there a place?" She answered, "I know where there is one, far outside." She desired to get Puna. So they swam way out in the sea until they were out of sight nor could they see the sharp peaks of the mountains. They forgot everything else but each other. This woman was Kiha-wahine.

The people on the beach wailed, but did not take canoes to help them. They swam over to Molokai. Here they left their surf-boards on the beach and went inland. They came to the cave house of the woman. He saw no man inside nor did he hear any voice, all was quiet.

Puna stayed there as a kind of prisoner and obeyed the commands of the woman. She took care of him and prepared his food. They lived as husband and wife for a long time, and at last his real body began to change.

Once he went out of the cave. While standing there he heard voices, loud and confused. He wanted to see what was going on, but he could not go, because the woman had laid her law on him, that if he went away he would be killed.

He returned to the cave and asked the woman, "What is that noise I heard from the sea?" She said: "Surf-riding, perhaps, or rolling the maika stone. Some one is winning and you heard the shouts." He said, "It would be fine for me to see the things you have mentioned." She said, "To-morrow will be a good time for you to go and see."

In the morning he went down to the sea to the place where the people were gathered together and saw many sports.

While he was watching, one of the men, Hinole, the brother of his wife, saw him and was pleased. When the sports were through he invited Puna to go to their house and eat and talk.

Hinole asked him, "Whence do you come, and
what house do you live in?” He said, “I am from the mountains, and my house is a cave.” Hinole meditated, for he had heard of the loss of Puna at Oahu. He loved his brother-in-law, and asked, “How did you come to this place?” Puna told him all the story. Then Hinole told him his wife was a goddess. “When you return and come near to the place, go very easily and softly, and you will see her in her real nature, as a mo-o, or dragon; but she knows all that you are doing and what we are saying. Now listen to a parable. Your first wife, Haumea, is the first born of all the other women. Think of the time when she was angry with you. She had been sporting with you and then she said in a tired way, ‘I want the water.’ You asked, ‘What water do you want?’ She said, ‘The water from Poliahu of Mauna Kea.’ You took a water-jar and made a hole so that the water always leaked out, and then you went to the pit of Pele. That woman Pele was very old and blear-eyed, so that she could not see you well, and you returned to Haumea. She was that wife of yours. If you escape this mo-o wife she will seek my life. It is my thought to save your life, so that you can look into the eyes of your first wife.”

The beautiful dragon-woman had told him to cry with a loud voice when he went back to the cave. But when Puna was going back he went slowly and softly, and saw his wife as a dragon, and understood the words of Hinole. He tried to hide, but was trembling and breathing hard.

His wife heard and quickly changed to a human body, and cursed him, saying: “You are an evil man coming quietly and hiding, but I heard your breath when you thought I would not know you. Perhaps I will eat your eyes. When you were talking with Hinole you learned how to come and see me.”

The dragon-goddess was very angry, but Puna did not say anything. She was so angry that the hair on her neck rose up, but it was like a whirlwind, soon quiet and the anger over. They dwelt together, and the woman trusted Puna, and they had peace.

One day Puna was breathing hard, for he was thirsty and wanted the water of the gods.

The woman heard his breathing, and asked, “Why do you breathe like this?” He said: “I want water. We have dwelt together a long time and now I need the water.” “What water is this you want?” He said, “I must have the water of Poliahu of Mauna Kea, the snow-covered mountain of Hawaii.”

She said, “Why do you want that water?” He said: “The water of that place is cold and heavy with ice. In my youth my good grandparents always brought water from that place
battle, but we will not let you go or you will be killed, because she is very angry against you. She has held you, the husband of our sister Haumea. She should find her own husband and not take what belongs to another. You stay with us and at the right time you can go back to your wife.”

Kiha-wahine went to Poliahu, but could not fill the water-jar. She poured the water in and filled the jar, but when the jar was lifted it became light. She looked back and saw the water lying on the ground, and her husband far beyond at the pit of Pele. Then she became angry and called all the dragons of Molokai, Lanai, Maui, Kahoolawe, and Hawaii.

When she had gathered all the dragons she went up to Kilauea and stood on the edge of the crater and called all the people below, telling them to give her the husband. They refused to give Puna up, crying out: “Where is your husband? This is the husband of our sister; he does not belong to you, O mischief-maker.”

Then the dragon-goddess said, “If you do not give up this man, of a truth I will send quickly all my people and fill up this crater and capture all your fires.” The dragons threw their drooling saliva in the pit, and almost destroyed the fire of the pit where Pele lived, leaving Ka-mohohalii’s place untouched.
Then the fire moved and began to rise with great strength, burning off all the saliva of the dragons. Kiha-wahine and the rest of the dragons could not stand the heat even a little while, for the fire caught them and killed a large part of them in that place. They tried to hide in the clefts of the rocks. The earthquakes opened the rocks and some of the dragons hid, but fire followed the earthquakes and the fleeing dragons. Kiha-wahine ran and leaped down the precipice into a fish-pond called by the name of the shadow, or aka, of the dragon, Loko-aka (the shadow lake).

So she was imprisoned in the pond, husbandless, scarcely escaping with her life. When she went back to Molokai she meant to kill Hinole, because she was very angry for his act in aiding Puna to escape. She wanted to punish him, but Hinole saw the trouble coming from his sister, so arose and leaped into the sea, becoming a fish in the ocean.

When he dove into the sea Kiha-wahine went down after him and tried to find him in the small and large coral caves, but could not catch him. He became the Hinalea, a fish dearly loved by the fishermen of the islands. The dragon-goddess continued seeking, swimming swiftly from place to place.

Ounauna saw her passing back and forth, and said, "What are you seeking, O Kiha-wahine?" She said, "I want Hinole." Ounauna said: "Unless you listen to me you cannot get him, just as when you went to Hawaii you could not get your husband from Pele. You go and get the vine inahua and come back and make a basket and put it down in the sea. After a while dive down and you will find that man has come inside. Then catch him."

The woman took the vine, made the basket, came down and put it in the sea. She left it there a little while, then dove down. There was no Hinole in the basket, but she saw him swimming along outside of the basket. She went up, waited awhile, came down again and saw him still swimming outside. This she did again and again, until her eyes were red because she could not catch him. Then she was angry, and went to Ounauna and said: "O slave, I will kill you today. Perhaps you told the truth, but I have been deceived, and will chase you until you die."

Ounauna said: "Perhaps we should talk before I die. I want you to tell me just what you have done, then I will know whether you followed directions. Tell me in a few words. Perhaps I forgot something."

The dragon said, "I am tired of your words and I will kill you." Then Ounauna said,
“Suppose I die, what will you do to correct any mistakes you have made?”

Then she told how she had taken vines and made a basket and used it. Ounauna said: “I forgot to tell you that you must get some sea eggs and crabs, pound and mix them together and put them inside the basket. Put the mouth of the basket down. Leave it for a little while, then dive down and find your brother inside. He will not come out, and you can catch him.” This is the way the Hinalea is caught to this day.

After she had caught her brother she took him to the shore to kill him, but he persuaded her to set him free. This she did, compelling him ever after to retain the form of the fish Hinalea.

Kiha-wahine then went to the island Maui and dwelt in a deep pool near the old royal town of Lahaina.

After Pele had her battle with the dragons, and Puna had escaped according to the directions of Hiloole, he returned to Oahu and saw his wife, Haumea, a woman with many names, as if she were the embodiment of many goddesses.

After Puna disappeared, Kou became the new chief of Oahu. Puna went to live in the mountains above Kalihi-uka. One day Haumea went out fishing for crabs at Heeia, below the precipice of Koolau, where she was accustomed to go.
Puna came to a banana plantation, ate, and lay down to rest. He fell fast asleep and the watchmen of the new chief found him. They took his loin-cloth, and tied his hands behind his back, bringing him thus to Kou, who killed him and hung the body in the branches of a breadfruit-tree. It is said that this was at Wai-kaha-lulu just below the steep diving rocks of the Nuuanu stream.

When Haumea returned from gathering moss and fish to her home in Kalihi-uka, she heard of the death of her husband. She had taken an akala vine, made a pa-u, or skirt, of it, and tied it around her when she went fishing, but she forgot all about it, and as she hurried down to see the body of her husband, all the people turned to look at her, and shouted out, "This is the wife of the dead man."

She found Puna hanging on the branches. Then she made that breadfruit-tree open. Leaving her pa-u on the ground where she stood, she stepped inside the tree and bade it close about her and appear the same as before. The akala of which the pa-u had been made lay where it was left, took root and grew into a large vine.

The fat of the body of Puna fell down through the branches and the dogs ate below the tree. One of these dogs belonged to the chief Kou.
It came back to the house, played with the chief, then leaped, caught him by the throat and killed him.

Note.—This is the same legend as “The Wonderful Breadfruit Tree” published in the “Legends of Old Honolulu,” but the names are changed and the time is altered from the earliest days of Hawaiian lore to the almost historic period of King Kakuhihewa, whose under-chief mentioned in this legend gave the name to Old Honolulu, as for centuries it bore the name “Kou.” The legend is new, however, in so far as it gives the account of the infatuation of Puna for Kiha-wahine, the dragon-goddess, and his final escape from her.