

Story of Mauna a Wākea - Mauna Kea Shawls

This traditional account is associated with **Mauna a Wākea**, now known as **Mauna Kea**, and **Poli'ahu**, the goddess of snow. The story begins with **Poli'ahu**, who lives on the top of **Mauna a Wākea**. Because of her great beauty, her *hānai* father **Kāne**, placed a *kapu* upon her so that she cannot leave the top of the mountain. He so loves his daughter that he cannot bear the thought that she would fall in love, marry and leave him to live somewhere down below or far away, **Kāne**, not able to fathom this notion, puts her under this *kapu* – or restriction, thereby protecting her, just as any father presumably would.

As he knows that **Poli'ahu** will be lonely living on the top of the mountain, **Kāne** provides three *po'e mālama* (attendants) who will care for, tend to **Poli'ahu's** every need and also upkeep this *kapu*. These individuals will remain with her atop **Mauna a Wākea**.

First he gives her a nurse, **Līhau**, who is said to go everywhere **Poli'ahu** goes, never leaving her side. **Līhau** in her elemental form is the first morning dew found on blades of grass or scattered on the ground. Second, she is given **Lilinoe** who will care for all of **Poli'ahu's** desires. **Lilinoe** is the fine and misty rain that falls gently from the heavens above. **Kīpu'upu'u**, the icy winds and rain and **Waiau** are also *po'e mālama* (attendants) given to **Poli'ahu**.

A bathing pool is dug by **Kāne**, bearing the same name as her attendant **Waiau**. **Kāne** knows that his daughter's favorite pastime is to bathe in the cold and chilling waters of **Waiau**, therefore this lake atop **Mauna a Wākea** is exclusively for **Poli'ahu**.

Now let the story take us to a far away land, where a man dreams each night of a wondrous place of white capped mountains and a magnificently beautiful woman. His dreams propel him to go in search of this place and this woman. As he sails upon the ocean, his *wa'a* (canoe) comes upon the horizon. His eyes behold the snow capped mountains exactly as he has seen them in his dreams. Overwhelmed by excitement, he lands his *wa'a* at **Kawaihae** and proceeds to the cool uplands of **Waimea**. It is here that he beholds the expanse of **Mauna a Wākea** and makes the climb to the summit.

Upon reaching the top, he sees **Poli'ahu** bathing in the cold waters of Lake **Waiau** as her attendants stand watch. Once they are aware that a stranger is present, the story tells us that they rush out to confront him. Although he tries to tell them that he has traveled from afar to be with this woman of his dreams, he is driven away and is forced to descend the mountain. Not allowing defeat to overcome him, he ascends a second time only to come upon the same fascinating scene, the beautiful **Poli'ahu** in the waters of **Waiau**. Her *po'e mālama* once again rush out telling this man that he must leave at once as they have been tasked to upkeep **Kāne's kapu**.

Fortunately for the stranger, there lives a *mo'owahine*, the guardian of Lake **Waiau**, whose name is

Mo'oinanea. She calls out to **Kāne** asking him for a chance to speak to him. She tells him that she has discerned the nature of this man and it is in the best interest to allow **Kāne's** beloved daughter to marry this man for there will not be another who will love her as he does.

After thinking a while, **Kāne** comes to a decision and calls his daughter and this man to come before him. He tells them both what **Mo'oinanea** has said and reveals to the two that this is what he will allow. He tells this man that he will be allowed to embrace, to love his daughter, the beautiful snow goddess, two times a day, each and every day. The first time will be when the sun rises and the second time at the sun's setting. He also says that this is to remain *no nā kau a kau*, for all seasons forever and ever.

So until today, we bear witness to the love between **Poli'ahu** and he who is known as **Kūkahau'ula**, **Kū** of the red-tinged snow. It is at these specific times each and every day that **Mauna a Wākea** will begin to turn magnificent hues of pink, red, orange and sometimes even purple. Our eyes then behold the embracing love that **Kāne** allows **Kūkahau'ula** every sunrise and every sunset, each and every day, *no nā kau a kau. Eia la, ua 'ikea...*

This account of the Poli'ahu Story was shared by cultural resource and storyteller, Ku'ulei Keakealani of Waimea, Hawai'i Island who credits this version of the story to Tutu Kalani Phillips of Waimea.

Mauna Kea Shawls are a cherished reminder of the love that we hold in our hearts for **Mauna a Wākea**. The shawls are named according to their color in order to perpetuate the sacredness of the story, areas on the mountain and current issues being faced regarding these storied places or *wahi pana*. We wear them everyday, everywhere and every time we do we remember that we are still sacred, as sacred as the places we stand for, the ways that we live for.

Poli'ahu i ke kapu – dark blue/tan, **Kūkahau'ula** – maroon/tan, **Waiau** – teal/tan, **Mo'oinanea** – green/tan, **Pōhakuloa** – black/tan, **Kealohawena'ula mau a mau** - (sunrise and sunset) - orange/tan, **Kānehoalani** – yellow/tan, **Līhau** – lavender, **Kīpu'upu'u** – gray/black, **Lilinoe** – white/tan, **Hawai'i to Kaua'i and beyond** - purple/tan, **Kūkia'imauna** (guardians of the mountain) – brown/tan, **'Āhinahina** – silver/black, **'Ulaleo** (red spirit) - red/tan, **Mauna a Wākea i Maui nui a Kama** - pink/tan, **Piha pono ka mana'o** (clarity, blue sky mind) - True blue/tan, **'A'ahu mauna** - (wear your ceremony) - turmeric/tan, **He 'ohana Kākou** (All my relations) - Turquoise.

The design of the Mauna Kea Shawls was created by Pomai Bertelmann which was inspired by the song *Poli'ahu i ke kapu*, composed and recorded by Hāwane Rios. This song may be purchased on iTunes. Proceeds from the Mauna Kea Shawls are utilized for spreading awareness of the sacredness of Mauna a Wākea through all means possible. Payment by Venmo, cash, check or money order of \$25.00 per shawl + shipping starting at \$8.00. For inquiries and orders, text Dina Case at 808-729-5882.

