

Papahānaumoku and Wākea

By Kimo Armitage

Papahānaumoku and Wākea are among the descendants of Pō. Papahānaumoku is a glorious woman, and she attracts the attention of Wākea, a magnificent man.

Papahānaumoku means “Papa who gives birth to islands,” a name she aptly deserves because the first child born from her union with Wākea is the island of Hawai‘i.

Papahānaumoku and Wākea are inseparable, and they spend entire days and nights together. Soon the next child born to them is Maui, who is followed by Kaho‘olawe. Kaho‘olawe is also known as Kanaloa because he is born in the shape of a porpoise.

Although Papahānaumoku and Wākea are still married and love each other deeply, Papahānaumoku one day decides to travel to Kapakapakaua, a place in Tahiti. A lonely Wākea seeks the comfort of another woman and meets the beautiful Ka‘ula. Ka‘ula and Wākea have a child whom they name Lāna‘ika‘ula, a red island.

Wākea meets another woman named Hina. He lives with her and has another child that is born an island. Molokainuihina. Wākea lives with Hina and Ka‘ula. Papahānaumoku learns of her husband’s two new wives.

Papahānaumoku is in Tahiti when she hears the shrill cry of a plover named Laukaula, who is making his yearly journey to warmer weather. Laukaula tells Papahānaumoku about Wākea and his two new wives, and Papahānaumoku is furious with jealousy. She sails immediately from Tahiti and confronts her husband. Wākea cannot deny his two new wives and his two new children, so Papahānaumoku decides to make him jealous by finding a new love of her own.

Papahānaumoku meets a very young and virile man, Lua. They live together as man and wife, and she soon gives birth to another island, O‘ahualua. Yet Papahānaumoku cannot deny the love she still feels for Wākea and Wākea cannot deny the love he still has for Papahānaumoku. They abandon their lovers and reconcile their love for each other. Soon Kamawaeluanimoku, also known as Kaua‘i, is born, followed by the next child, Ni‘ihau.

This is how the Hawaiian Islands were created. For a while, all is calm as Papahānaumoku and Wākea care for their island children.

Reprinted with permission from: Armitage, K. (2005). *Akua Hawai‘i: Hawaiian Gods and Their Stories*. Honolulu, HI: Bishop Museum Press.

