

The Legend of the Wauke Tree

Maikoha lived with his family at Pūiwa. This place was in the cool and green valley of Nu‘uanu, on O‘ahu. He worked hard every day in the *lo‘i* near his home. He grew enough food to care for his family, pay the annual taxes during Makahiki, and provide the family *ho‘okupu* to the gods.

He had two daughters, Lauhuiki and La‘ahana. He loved them very much. He wanted them to be warm. He did not want them to suffer from the chilly winds and rain that often swept through the valley.

Maikoha was getting older. His body was not healthy and strong enough to withstand the cold winds. As he became older and weaker, Maikoha knew that he would die soon. One day he called his daughters to him. He told them that when he died they should secretly bury him near the cool, clear waters of the stream that flowed by their home.

Then Maikoha said to them, “Watch for a tree that will grow from that place. That tree,” he said, “will be my own body growing into a useful tree. You will call it *wauke*.”

“But how will we know how to use the tree?” asked Lauhuiki.

Maikoha continued, “When the tree is grown, cut the stems of the tree. Strip off the bark. Then pound and pound the stems with a *kua kapa* until the bark fibers cling to each other like cloth.”

lo‘i taro patch

makahiki
ancient festival
celebrated by
sports and a
taboo on war

ho‘okupu
gift, offering

wauke mulberry; its
bark was used to
make tapa

kua kapa tapa

maile
native Hawaiian
twining shrub

After he gave his instructions, Maikoha lay down to rest. Soon he died. His daughters did as they were told. They buried him in a sunny area near the stream. Every day they cleaned the area and placed a fresh *maile* lei on the grave.

A few days after they buried their father, a tree began to grow straight and tall from the grave just as their father had said it would. Each day as they watched the tree grow, it spread out many new branches. They named it *wauke* as their father had told them to do.

"It's time we do what father said," Lauhiki told her sister.

While asking their father for guidance, they carefully cut the stems off the tree. They stripped off the bark and soaked the branches in water. Then they began to pound and pound the bark until the fibers began to cling to each other like cloth. As they did each step of the process, Maikoha guided their hands.

They recognized that their father was their own *'aumakua*.

This was how they learned to make *kapa*. They made the *malo* and the *pā'ū* for clothing. These kept them warm and comfortable when the cold winds blew through the valley.

The *wauke* tree spread throughout Nu'uaniu Valley and other parts of O'ahu and the other islands. Whenever a branch was broken off the tree and stuck in the ground, it would grow. This way the spirit of Maikoha continued to live on all the islands.

'aumakua
family god

kapa
tapa (bark cloth)
malo loincloth
pā'ū skirt

