

HINA MOVES TO THE MOON: A HAWAIIAN STORY ABOUT OUR MOON

Hina fashioned the finest and softest kapa cloth in Hawaii. She made this cloth from the bark of the banyan tree. Because her cloth was so fine, it was in great demand. She worked long, long hours with little rest and eventually grew tired. She was also tired because her sons were unruly and her husband was lazy and none of them ever helped her.

One day, Hina decided to leave Hawaii, so she traveled up a rainbow into the sky. She went to the Sun, but found it so hot and inhospitable that she could not live there. The next night, she climbed the rainbow to the Moon and was so pleased with what she found that she made it her home. The Hawaiian name for the Moon, “Mahina,” is derived from her name.



In some stories, the dark regions on the Moon are said to be a banyan tree from which Hina makes cloth for the gods. Once, when Hina was up in the banyan tree, she broke off a branch for its bark. It fell to Earth, took root, and was the first tree of its kind ever seen in the world.

The clear space in the Moon is where the branch once was, and beneath the tree in that area is where Hina has her home.

On a clear night, when you are outside, look up at the Moon and see if you can find the banyan tree, and recall the story of Hina and the wonderful cloth she makes for the gods.

Contributed by:
Paul Coleman, Ph.D.
University of Hawaii, Institute for Astronomy