



Legend of the Coconut

Tala Tupu'a 'o e Niu

It is said that there was once a very beautiful maiden called Hina who had a lovely bathing hole or pond where an eel lived. One day Hina's father caught her making love with a handsome young man, so he grabbed the man. Imagine his surprise when the young man turned into an eel and slipped into the water!

An order was immediately sent out that everyone must come and help to empty all the water out of the pond. As soon as this was done and the pond lay dry, the eel was lifted out and killed. But before he was killed, he cried out:

“Tossing aside wood and stones at the
bottom of the pond,
Search for poor eel. Find me and prepare
to cut me up.
Cut me up and divide out
To your friends and relatives.
Only my head bury close to the surface,
Cover the head of poor eel with dirt,
Leave it for three or four nights,
Then a coconut tree will slowly begin to grow.
It will bear fruit and a face will appear,
A most useful tree it will be in many ways.
Scrape the coconut and add flowers
(for making coconut oil)
Or take the young coconut and

‘Oku pehē tokua na’e ‘i ai e taupo’ou ko Hina ko e
ta’ahine faka’ofa’ofa mo’oni. Na’e ‘i ai hono vai kaukau
pea na’e nofo ai ‘a e fu’u tuna. Tokua na’e ‘i ai ‘a e ‘aho
‘e taha kuo ma’ungatāmaki mai ‘e he tamai ‘a Hina, ‘oku
lolotonga alea ‘a Hina mo e tangata talavou pea hanga ai
‘e he tamai ‘a Hina ‘o puke ‘a e tangata, pea ‘i he ‘ene
puke, ne fokifā pē kuo liliu ‘a e tangata ia ‘o Tuna pea
homo ia mei he nima ‘o e tamai ‘a Hina ‘o hola ki he vai.

Na’e ‘alu atu leva e tu’utu’uni ke katoa mai e kakai ‘o
ohu ‘a e vai ke maha. Nau ohu, ohu pea maha kae
tekefili hake ‘a e tuna pea nau hiki leva ‘o tamate’i ke
tafa, kae te’eki ke mate na’a ne fai hake leva ‘ene tangi:

“Mou fofa papa pea tā maka,
Pea ma’u hake ‘a tuna ‘o teu tafa.
Tafa pea mou tufekina,
Tufa holo ‘i homou kāinga.
Ko hoku ‘ulu pē ke tanumia,
Pea tanutanu e ‘ulu’i tuna,
‘Oua ke pō tolu pe pō fa,
‘Iloange kuo malangalanga,
Pea fua leva ia ‘o mata.
Ko ‘ena e fua hulu maama,
Vau pea fakaope ai ha kakala,
Ko ‘ena hono niu mata,
Ta’o ia ko hono mafana,
Pea u foki ā au ki Pulotu ‘Aka’aka.”

Bake it (for drinking) to keep my lover warm.
And I'll return to Pulotu."

It was done as the eel had asked, and from his head the first coconut grew. If you husk a coconut and scrape it clean, you will see clearly the eyes and mouth of the eel. Thus, it was out of his deep love for Hina that the eel presented himself as a gift that would be useful forever to his lover and to the world.

Na'e fai 'o hangē ko e loto 'o e tuna, pea ko e 'ulu
'o e tuna 'oku tupu mai ai e niu, ka mou vakai'i lelei
ha fo'i niu 'o hoka pea vau te ke lava 'o 'ilo ai e mata
mo e ngutu 'o e tuna.