

**From "Kinship: The Design of the Hawaiian Feather Cloak" by Tom Cummins
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The legend of Umi is one of the most often told legends in Hawaii, and it derives its social meaning from the social structures of Hawaiian culture. Here is the legend of Umi in a condensed form.

The Legend of Umi

It is said that Umi was a part chief because his mother, Akahiakulana, was not a chieftess, although his father, Liloa, was a very high chief, whose genealogy could be traced to the very beginning of all things. So it is that Umi was high on his father's side, but very humble on his mother's side. But in tracing out the origin of Akahiakulana, his mother, it is found that she must have been of very high blood, for her name appears in the genealogical tree of the Kings.

Liloa, the father of Umi, King of Hawaii had as his first wife Piena who bore Umi's older half-brother Hakau.

After having dedicated a temple at Kokohalile, Liloa goes to bathe in a stream where he sees Akahiakulana. Seeing how beautiful she is Liloa seduces her. After living with her a short while, Liloa sees that she is pregnant and asks her "Who is your father?" Akahiakulana answers, "Kuleanakupiko." Liloa then says, "you are a cousin of mine?" She replies "Maybe so." Liloa then leaves but before doing so he tells Akahiakulana that if she has a son to name him Umi and send him to him. He leaves behind his malo, niho-palaoa, and war club for Umi so that he can recognize him.

Umi grows up in his mother's household, thinking her husband is his father. Finally after mistreatment of Umi by the husband, Akahiakulana says, "Stop. You can not treat Umi in this fashion for he is not your son but that of Liloa."

She then sends Umi off to join his real father giving him the things Liloa had left behind and having two friends to go with him. Umi finds the court, climbs over the wall, and sits down on his father's lap. Just as the guards start to seize him, Umi produces the malo and Liloa recognizes him as his son. All goes well except with Hakau, Umi's older step-brother, who is absolutely furious at his father's recognition of Umi.

At Liloa's death, Hakau is willed all the lands of Hawaii, but Umi is left the temples and the gods to care for. Umi therefore lives under Hakau as dependent but in a high position. While thus living, Hakau shows great hatred for Umi in many ways. If Umi took Hakau's surf board, Hakau would become angry and say to Umi, "You must not use my surfboard because your mother is not a chieftess; the same with my loin cloth." Finally after much abuse, Umi leaves court with his two followers. They go off and live secretly with a common family, taking wives.

During the aku season, people begin seeing the frequent appearance of a rainbow on the cliff. Kaoluloku, a high priest who lives in this area also sees the rainbow and wonders at its appearance. Being of a class well versed in ancient lore, he realizes this is the sign of a true chief and knowing of Umi's disappearance, follows the rainbow. He takes Umi and his two followers with him and helps Umi to raise an army. With the army, Umi is able to overthrow his half-brother who is hated by all and becomes the King of Hawaii.

Reduced to the barest outline, the story concerns the gaining of rank, the fall from that rank, and the subsequent regaining of that rank.