**The legend of Ki o Rahi**

A posse of underworld dwelling patupaiarehe snatched the beautiful Ti Ara from her tribal gardens. They then cast a spell over the bush behind them, making it impenetrable. Her whanau cried out in despair but her resourceful husband Rahi was undeterred and with the help of his tribes-people built a large kite, manu tangata. For sustenance he gathered ki, small round-chorded kete filled with a single moa egg and tied them onto the supports of his kite. After patient karakia and a brief farewell he was launched on a favourable wind that carried him high above the enchanted bush. In flight Rahi struck turbulence that caused several of his ki to unravel and by chance fall into the large aerie of the treetop-dwelling giant eagle Namu, to feed her hungry eaglets. This fluke was to be a crucial stroke of luck. He drifted safely onto enormous red-tipped ponga fronds whereupon he gorged a ki, attached some about him, then hurriedly descended and proceeded to track his wife’s abductors. Ti Ara had thoughtfully bent back the ends of fern leaves to reveal their shiny white underside, this quickly guided Rahi in his pursuit.

Though still well ahead the patupaiarehe felt Rahi’s audacious presence and cast another powerful spell. This invocation caused a second sun to appear hovering in the sky above! It burned fiercely with ten times the radiance of Ra. Immediately the immense canopies of bush that enshrouded Rahi were baked dry. Presently the entire bush covered plateau crumbled then flaked and cascaded like brown snowflakes onto the ground. Rahi was in total awe and became transfixed knee deep in the litter. Yet his body and everything upon it remained unscathed! He turned numbly and gazed at the complete devastation as great sheets of mist rose momentarily and then evaporated fizzing in the intense heat. He witnessed rocks about him fracturing and refracturing like snapping branches until they became piles of pebbles that melted into mounds of sand. Simultaneously in the distance he heard a screaming crescendo, and spied a shimmering wall hundreds of metres high racing towards him! He hugged papatuanuku as the powerful wind driven furnace blasted its way through, gathering everything in its path, and leaving in its wake a vast scorching desert.

This time the effect on Rahi was devastating. He quickly became parched and attempted to drink the egg-yolk from a ki but found instead an inedible rubbery core. He then wandered about aimlessly looking for water to quench his deep maddening thirst and for shade to stop his skin blistering in the molten heat. Finally with his sight blurred and body bowed Rahi crouched between his last two ki and lamented his inability to rescue his darling Ti Ara. He recited loving waiata and karakia to her vision. He then drifted into blackness.

As he opened his eyes he heard from within a calling that he knew was from his Tupuna – he had joined them! When he came-to properly however the pain flooded back into his body and begged for release! Somehow he held on and through barely opened eyelids he noticed in the haze a bright yellow pounamu calling him intimately not four steps distant! The rock was his Tupuna and it called for his mauri as it too was suffering. Rahi managed with great effort from his prone position to lob his ki, which contained his mauri, to his tupuna where upon contact a small patch of green appeared– this indication of life spurred Rahi on and he reached the rock, touched it and felt its reciprocal surge of energy. From out of the ether the giant eagle Namu appeared, it perched on the rock and spread its shade giving wings, and dribbled precious water and tiny fish from its massive beak onto the upturned face of Rahi. Silent greetings were exchanged.

Just as life was getting better for Rahi a gargantuan lizard appeared out of the haze thrashing at the sand with its massive tail in a scything motion. It caused a huge billowing dustbowl as it kept going around and around the helpless trio. A deep circular canyon was formed that filled with spring water to become a lake. Rahi was ecstatic and dragged himself to the waters edge and then into its cold embrace. Suddenly an inner warning told him to leave this respite and within moments of doing so a large submerged shadow churned the surface as it passed. The lizard had turned into the taniwha called Utumai – preventing Rahi from leaving the island!

In unison both suns then disappeared bringing forth a cold bitter night. Even Namu could no longer fly as the chill pierced her feathers and froze her body. The trio huddled together whilst Rahi for some inexplicable reason looked heavenward for a sign. At that exact moment, high up on their maunga, Rahi’s father, Eru, was catching his breath and casting onto the prevailing wind the dancing dappled light essence that he had collected from the spring pool in their sacred cave. The airstream took this stardust higher and higher, forming three bright stars that aligned in the blackness in front of Rahi’s eyes! Although suffering intensely from frostbite and fatigue Rahi stood tall and peered about the lake and spied in-line with the stars an ice pathway from island to shore! Lifting his frozen friend Namu and farewelling his Tupuna he lost no time in proceeding to shuffle across the ice causeway. When nearly across the arahuka, the great taniwha surfaced at some distance and noticed Rahi. In a rage it arched its neck backwards and catapulted its huge head forward, this wrenched its razor sharp teeth loose, and they whistled through the air and struck the ice explosively near Rahi but failed to halt his progress. Utumai shuddered, and then slid lifeless into the roto. The sun once again appeared in a friendly manner and warmed them both so that Namu could return home. Shortly Rahi’s people arrived and together they headed to the mountains where Ti Ara’s abductors were known to live.

Some days later they arrived at the large entrance to the patupaiarehe cave. While some shouted threats into the papatomo, Rahi led others to block up all the steam and fissure vents that covered the thermal mountain. Presently steam billowed from the cave entrance and a multitude of patupaiarehe streamed out in disarray. Ti Ara also emerged to the joy of her hapu but their reunion was brief as everyone, on feeling the ground shake and hearing the terrible rumblings, was running for their lives! Rahi and Ti Ara were continually ushered on as they embraced.

The spell maker who assisted in the abduction, Te Puhuru, stayed inside the confines of his domain. The next day cataclysmic explosions obliterated the entire mountain and the shockwaves were so great they blasted massive rock slabs into space, one of which had within its cavity Te Puhuru - released of worldly constraints it is said his mischief now plagues the heavens!

Both tribes headed in the direction of the roto where Rahi had been trapped and congregated there too exhausted to argue or fight. Compassion prevailed and for days they feasted together on the sweet meat of the great taniwha and talked. It was on these shores that a combined tribal council created tikanga for the purpose of eradicating warfare between them forever! They devised game based initiatives, centred on the memory of Ti Ara’s abduction, with hakari as the nexus for resolving conflicts. Everyone celebrated this peaceful process by wearing carved rock pendants around their necks to represent the Tupuna. For generations people would gaze across the lake to the prominent pounamu on the motu and remind each other of their ancestors’ legacy of peace. Ki-o-Rahi duly sustained peaceful interactions amongst hapu.

(This version of the story was originally posted on a maori.org.nz forum – unfortunately we do not know who to attribute it to)