

THE BATTLE OF THE MOUNTAINS

Long ago, there were many mountains clustered together near the heart of the Fish of Māui (North Island). They included Tongariro, who was the chief, Taranaki, Tauhara, Putauaki, Ruawahia, and Pihanga, the only female among them. Because of Pihanga's outstanding beauty, all the male mountains wanted her for their wife and fought among themselves over her. Finally Tongariro won, Pihanga became his wife, and Tongariro drove away the other mountains.

The Battle of the Mountains



The mountains had to travel by night. They knew that when the sun rose, they would remain where they were, never to move again.

Tauhara and Putauaki decided to go towards the east. After they left, the hollow that remained filled with water and became Lake Rotoaira. Tauhara was very slow – he kept stopping to look back at Pihanga. When the sun rose, Tauhara was still close to Lake Taupō, where he still remains today.

Putauaki travelled more quickly, but when the sun rose, he was caught at the northern end of the Kaingaroa Plain, in the Bay of Plenty. Ruawahia was late leaving after fighting with Te Mahoihoi, but made it to the Waiariki area, where he can be seen today as a peak of Tarawera.

Taranaki was the mountain who fought hardest for Pihanga. However, he too eventually had to leave. He went west, heading for the setting place of the sun. As he travelled, he carved out a channel that filled with water and became the Whanganui river.

When Taranaki reached the farthest west he could go, two small female mountains called to him, inviting him to remain with them. Taranaki is still there today, embraced by Pouakai and Patua, but he still looks longingly inland towards Pihanga.

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