

The Creation of the Stars

by W. Dittmer

Te Ra, the day-eye of Rangi is closing, and sends a last glowing look over the peacefully dreaming Moana-rarapa, the Lake of the Glittering Water.

Softly murmurs the lake and reflects the sacred Red with which Tane once adorned the heaven, whilst over his floating colours black swans are drifting like dream-thoughts over a beautiful face. Slowly dying away in blue, deep blue and pure, is the last breath of day silently departing into the heavens.

A canoe is putting off the shore, and voices of children are heard leading it light-hearted with mirth and laughter and splashing of water over the lake, which looks clear and glittering green up to the stars. Softly now breathes the air, and the mirror is gone--the day has departed.

Muttering departs Hupene, our old friend, in dread of the darkness; with his mat he is covering our shoulders and he murmurs these words:

“Remember, while you are watching the stars on the night-mat of Rangi, and know, great is the power of the god Tane-Mahuta, and his are the stars.

Remember, his are the stars.”--

Bright shimmer the stars through the summer night, and the earth breathes freshness and sleep, leading the heart to rest, and it yet filling with longing; but from the heaven descends hope, promising the new day and the future.

Tane once commenced his great wandering to find adornment for his father, the heaven, whom he beheld standing high over Papa, naked by day and lonely and cold by night, and he spoke:

“O, father Rangi, my heart is looking upon you in sorrow, for you are lonely and cold, and I will go in quest for adornments which shall make you beautiful to the eyes of Papa and her children.” Thereupon he went on his way, and, whilst he was wandering through the ten heavens, he found Te-Kura, the Red Colour, and that he took back with him upon the earth. Here he rested for seven days and seven nights, and, when his strength was growing again, he commenced his work, and covered the heaven with the beautiful red colour. But behold, when he had finished this great work and descended again to earth, he let his eyes wander over the red sky, which was stretching now over Papa, and he found that this adornment was not worthy of his great father, and full of sorrow he took it away again leaving some of it only at Mahiku-rangi, the End of Heaven. He beheld now, when Rangi was closing his great eye, sending it down into the Po, or when he called for it again in the mornings so that it burst forth out of the Gate of Day, that the beauty of his father at Mahiku-Rangi was wonderful, but ever and ever it disappeared by day and by night.

Seven days and seven nights he was watching the dying away and bursting forth again of Rangi's beauty, and then out of his sorrow he sang these words up to his father: “Oh, Rangi, still you are cold and dark and lonely from the first night, to the second night, to the tenth night, when your daughter Te-marama ascends again out of the Source of Living Water, so that you look down upon Papa silent and sorrowful. What adornment can I find for you, that you may be happy and beautiful, and gladden the

heart of Papa, your loved one?"

After he had spoken these words he wandered forth again upon his mighty search, and all over the world he wandered, and farther and farther still he wandered, till he came to Tawhiti-nui, the Great Distance; and farther still, till at last he came to Te-Po, the Lower World. Here he found Hine-a-te-ao, the Daughter of the Light; she is the guardian of the Gates of the Lower World, and, tired from his long journey, he slept in her house.

In the darkness of night he beheld two beautiful stars shining forth; they were the children of Ira, and their names were Lonely South, and Shore of Heaven, the morning star, and his heart was glad over their beauty, so that his eyes could not sleep, and could not but rest upon them all the night.

In the morning he called Hine-a-te-ao, and showed her the two beautiful stars shimmering forth out of the darkness of the Po, and asked for them, for nothing could be more beautiful he thought as an adornment for his Father Rangi. Hine-a-te-ao answered: "Go, son, and take the stars!" And again he pleaded: "Oh, Hine, Daughter of the Light, show me the road that I may go and take the stars." And Hine-a-te-ao answered: "O, son, far is the way indeed! Go to the House of Tupu-renga-o-te-Po, the Growing Night: he is the guardian over the two stars, and his house is standing at Mahiku-rangi. There ask for the two stars, whose names are Toko-meha and Te-pae-tai-o-te-rangi; go and take the stars for your father Rangi."

After Tane had rested, and for seven days and seven nights strengthened himself through powerful incantations and many Karakias, he went on his way to Mahiku-rangi, to the House of the Guardian of the Stars, Tupu.

When at last he had found Tupu, he pictured the sorrows and the nakedness of his father, and asked him to give the beautiful stars to Rangi, and Tupu answered: "Oh, Tane, son of Rangi and Papa, the stars which you behold shimmering yonder are the sacred holders of the world; they are Hira-utu, Fish by the Land, Hira-tai, Fish of the Sea; Parinuku, Cliff by the Earth, and Pari-rangi, Cliff of the Heavens. Yes, it is my wish that you may adorn Rangi with yonder stars." And he gave him the Four Sacred Holders of the World, the stars of the four points of the compass, and then he gave him the five stars, Ao-tahi, Puaka and Tuku-rua, Tama-re-reti and Te-waka-a-tama-rereti.

All these stars Tane took away with him and fastened the four sacred stars in the four corners of Rangi; with the other five he formed a cross in the South.

Many more stars brought Tupu, and Tane distributed them over Rangi from the summit of the mountains whilst still the Sun was standing high in the heavens.

And again sorrow filled his heart when his eyes looked upon his work, for again he found that the adornment was not worthy of his father Rangi.

But at last he had finished his labour and that was about the time when the Sun was again entering the Gate of Night. Resting upon Papa, he watched the beautiful sacred red appear again at Mahiku-rangi, and, when with the departing sun darkness again filled the world, his wandering eyes perceived how star upon star commenced to live and shine forth, till at last Rangi in wonderful beauty was stretching over Papa, and his heart was full of joy and happiness, and he sang: "O, father Rangi, your beauty is indescribable; in truth you are now the ariki of Papa, and all her children will love you!"

Thus had spoken the old friend on the shores of the glittering Moana-rarapa.

Source:

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