

Rata

Wikibook

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Chapter 1

Rātā (Māori mythology)



Rātā gave the flowers of the rātā tree their colour

In Māori mythology, accounts vary somewhat as to the ancestry of **Rātā**. Usually he is a grandson of Tāwhaki and son of Wahieroa. Wahieroa is treacherously killed by Matuku-tangotango, an ogre. Rātā sets out to avenge the murder, travelling to the home of Matuku, where a servant of the ogre tells him that Matuku comes out to devour people each new moon, and that he can be killed at the pool where he washes his face and hair. Rātā waits till the ogre comes out and is leaning over with his head in the pool. He grabs him by the hair and kills him. Matuku's bones are used to make spears for hunting birds.

Rātā searches for his father's bones so that he can afford them the proper respect. He learns that the Ponaturi have the bones in their village. He must build a canoe to get there. He goes into the forest, and fells a tree, and cuts off the top. His day's work over, he goes home, and returns the next morning. To his surprise he finds the tree standing upright and whole. Once again he cuts it down, but when he returns he finds the tree standing again. He hides in the forest, and hears the voices of the multitude of the hākuturi (forest spirits, called rorotini in one account), who set to work to re-erect the tree, putting each chip into its proper place. He runs out and catches some of the hākuturi, who tell him they re-erected the tree because he insulted Tāne, the god of the forest, by not performing the correct rituals before felling the tree. Rātā is

ashamed, and expresses regret. Then the hākuturi make him a canoe, naming it Niwaru (alias Niwareka, Āniwaniwa, etc.)(Biggs 1966:450).

Rātā and his people launch the canoe and paddle off to find the Ponaturi. Arriving, Rātā cleverly surrounds them, kills their priests, and rescues his father's bones. The Ponaturi regroup and give chase. The battle goes badly until Rātā recites an incantation called Titikura that he overheard their priests recite while they were tapping together the bones of Wahieroa. In a flash all Rātā's dead warriors return to life and attack and slaughter all of the Ponaturi. Rātā is the father of Tūwhakararo, who is the father of Whakatau.

1.1 See also

- Rata (Tuamotu mythology)
- Rata (Tahitian mythology)
- Laka (Hawaiian and other Polynesian mythology)

1.2 References

- B. G. Biggs, 'Maori Myths and Traditions' in A.H. McLintock (editor), *Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, 3 Volumes. (Government Printer: Wellington), 1966, II:447-454.
- R. D. Craig, *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology* (Greenwood Press: New York, 1989), 134.
- G. Grey, *Polynesian Mythology* (reprint Taplinger Press: New York, 1970), 84-90.
- E. R. Tregear, *Maori-Polynesian Comparative Dictionary* (Lyon and Blair: Lambton Quay), 1891, 232, 399-400.
- J. White, *The Ancient History of the Maori*, 7 Volumes (Government Printer: Wellington), 1887-1891, III:2 for rorotini.

Chapter 2

Rata (Tuamotu mythology)

In the Tuamotu islands, the telling of the full cycle of the legend of **Rata** takes several evenings to tell.

The legend begins with his grandfather **Kui**, a demigod who marries **Puehuehu**. Their son **Vahi-vero** was stolen by two wild **ducks** that carry him to a distant island where two witches **Nua** and **Mere-hua** imprison him. **Kui** eventually rescues his son, captures the witches, and kills the ducks.

Once **Vahi-vero** reaches adulthood, he falls in love with a **water-nymph** **Tahiti-tokerau**, whom he persuades to marry him. She, however, is abducted by **Puna**, king of the **underworld**. Following his father's advice, he swims down to the underworld and rescues her while **Puna** is away. Shortly thereafter, **Tahiti-tokerau** becomes pregnant and gives birth to **Rata**.

Not long after the birth of **Rata**, **Puna** returns and learns that **Tahiti-tokerau** had been rescued. He summons the **shark** **Matuku-tagotago** who attack **Vahivero** and **Tahiti-tokerau** while they are crabbing. The shark swallows them and takes them back to **Kororupo** where **Tahiti-tokerau** is buried head down in the sand.

The orphan **Rata** is raised by his grandfather. When he learns of his parents' fate, he builds a large **canoe** to find them. Using his grandfather's magical adze, he enters the forest and chops down a tree. Overnight, however, goblins had restored the tree. He ambushes them and forces them to complete his canoe, which they accomplish in a single night. **Rata** then begins his quest to find his parents, which includes various adventures including defeating champion warrior **Manu-kura** in a contest for the hand of his wife, princess **Pupura-to-te-tai**, **Puna's** daughter. As he nears **Puna's** land he must overcome various monsters, including **Matuku-tagotago**, the shark that had killed his father, whom he cuts out of **Matuku's** belly. **Rata**, with the help of his servant **Taraka**, finally kills **Puna**, rescues his mother and restores her to health. They all return home.

2.1 See also

- **Rata** (Tahitian mythology)

- **Rātā** (Māori mythology)
- **Laka** (Hawaiian and other Polynesian mythology)

2.2 References

- R.D. Craig, *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology* (Greenwood Press: New York, 1989), 131-3;
- J.F. Stimson, *Tuamotuan Legends: Island of Anaa* (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press, 1937), 96-147.

Chapter 3

Rata (Tahitian mythology)

Rata, in Tahitian mythology, is said to have become king of Tahiti when his uncle, king Tumu-nui, and his father Vahieroa (Tahitian mythology) are swallowed by a great clam while they are on their way to Pitcairn. When he reaches adulthood, Rata plans to avenge his father. As in the Tuamotuan version, Rata identifies a tree to build his canoe, but it is protected by forest elves. After he captures them they build it for him in a single night. While en route for Pitcairn, Rata and his crew are sucked down into the same clam, but they use their spears to cut the monster open. They rescue the remains of Rata's father and uncle and bury them back in Tahiti. After recovering from their adventure, Rata sets out for further adventures. See also *Aremata-Popoa* and *Aremata-Rorua*.

3.1 See also

- Rata (Tuamotu mythology)
- Rātā (Māori mythology)
- Laka (Hawaiian and other Polynesian mythology)

3.2 References

- R.D. Craig, *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology* (Greenwood Press: New York, 1989), 133-4;
- M. Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology* (Yale U.P.: New Haven, 1948), 263-275.

Chapter 4

Laka

For other uses, see [Laka \(disambiguation\)](#).

In Hawaiian mythology, **Laka** is the name of a popu-



Red lehua blossom (Metrosideros polymorpha)

lar hero from Polynesian mythology. (In other parts of Polynesia she is known as **Rātā**, **Rata**, **Lata**, **Ata**, or **Lasa**). Lengthy legends of her exploits extend throughout the islands, and the kings of Tahiti and Hawai'i claimed her as their ancestor.

In the Hawaiian legend, **Laka** is the daughter of Wahieloa and Hina-hawa'e. She plans to sail to Hawaii to avenge the murder of her father, but her canoe-building is thwarted by the little gods of the forest. Because of her offerings to the great gods, however, they give her two outriggers that binds her together for her long voyage. She and her companions successfully steal the bones of her father from the cave of Kai-kapu.

In Hawai'i, Laka was also a deity identified with the hula and the red lehua blossom and is a deity of fertility.

In the story of Hi'iaka, Laka is one of Pele's sisters and guardian of the woodland.

In Malaccan mythology, laka is known as "sexual intercourse". This term is introduced by the great grandson of Parameswara - Victor Chang (knowledge from Kapitän Hang Xiang Yang).

Sources:

- R.D. Craig, *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology* (Greenwood Press: New York, 1989), 134.
- M. Beckwith, *Hawaiian Mythology* (Yale U.P.: New Haven, 1948), 263-75.

4.1 Hawai'i

Four deities of this name may be distinguished:^[1]

- (1) Ku-ka-ohia-LAKA, male patron of the hula-dance;^[2]
- (2) Papa-o-LAKA, the 'aumakua world of Kumuhonua;^[3]
- (3) LAKA, goddess of forest growth;
- (4) LAKA, son of Wahie-loa

4.2 Marquesas

In the Marquesan version of the myth, **Aka** is a great voyager, grandson of Tafaki. He made a historic voyage to Aotona (Rarotonga) in what are now the Cook Islands to obtain the highly prized feathers of a red parrot as gifts for his son and daughter. The voyage was done in a great outrigger canoe named Va'ahiva that had 140 rowers. Of these, 100 die of hunger before they reach Aotona, where they capture enough parrots to fill 140 bags with their feathers.

Sources:

- R.D. Craig, *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology* (Greenwood Press: New York, 1989), 6.
- E.S.C. Handy, *Marquesan Legends* (Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press: Honolulu, 1930), 130-1.

4.3 Samoa

In Samoa, where this hero's name is **Lata**, he is a great canoe builder originally from Fiji. He builds a huge outrigger canoe on the island of Ta'u and sails to Savai'i, where a mountain is named after him. From there, he sails to Tonga where he teaches the inhabitants better ways to build canoes.

Sources:

- R.D. Craig, *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology* (Greenwood Press: New York, 1989), 134.

4.4 Tonga

In Tonga, he is **Lasa**, who captures the chief of the forest elves, Haelefeke, and compels him to help him build a great canoe and pilot it to Fiji. En route, they are tested by various demons.

Sources:

- R.D. Craig, *Dictionary of Polynesian Mythology* (Greenwood Press: New York, 1989), 134.
- E.E.V. Collocott, *Tales and Poems of Tonga* (Bernice P. Bishop Museum Press: Honolulu, 1928), 15-16.

4.5 Notes

- [1] Martha Beckwith: *Hawaiian Mythology*. Yale U Pr, 1940. p. 569
- [2] Martha Beckwith : *Hawaiian Mythology*. Yale U Pr, 1940. p. 40
- [3] Martha Beckwith : *Hawaiian Mythology*. Yale U Pr, 1940. pp. 161-162

4.6 See also

- Rātā (Māori mythology)
- Rata (Tahitian mythology)
- Rata (Tuamotu mythology)

4.7 Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

4.7.1 Text

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- **Rata (Tuamotu mythology)** *Source:* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rata%20\(Tuamotu%20mythology\)?oldid=625617584](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rata%20(Tuamotu%20mythology)?oldid=625617584) *Contributors:* Kahuroa, Keahapana, Iridescent, Goldenrowley, Kudret abi, Mychele Trempetich and Anonymous: 2
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