There was once a hill with no name who lived on the edge of the Hautere forest. This nameless one was a pononga (slave) to the great chiefly mountain, Otanewainuku.

To the southwest was the shapely form of Puwhenua, a beautiful hill, clothed in all the fine greens of the ferns and shrubs and trees of the forest of Tane. The nameless one was desperately in love with Puwhenua, however her heart already belonged to Otanewainuku.

There seemed like no hope for the lowly slave. In despair the nameless one decided to end it all by drowning himself in the ocean, Te Moananui a Kiwa. Calling on the patupaiarehe, the people with magical powers who dwelled in the forests of Hautere, pononga asked them to plait the ropes with their magic and then haul him down towards the ocean.

Chanting their song they began to haul the nameless one slowly towards the water, gouging out the valley where the river Waimapu now flows. They followed the channel past Hairini, past Maungatapu and Matapihi and finally past Te Papa to the water's edge.

By this time it was very close to day break. The sun rose fixing the nameless one to that place. Being people of the night the patupaiarehe fled back to the shady depths of the Hautere forests, before the light of the sun descended upon them.

The patupaiarehe gave the name Mauao to this mountain which marks the entrance of Tauranga Moana. This means caught by the morning sun. In time, he has assumed greater mana than his rival Otanewainuku. Today he is known by most as Mount Maunganui, however to the Maori people he is still referred to as Mauao.