Tane Mahuta separates Rangi and Papa

Mankind have but only one set of primitive parents. They were Rangi and Papa, the sky father and the earth mother. They existed in the darkness of Te Po and their children existed in the same darkness.

Wearied by the continual darkness, their children yearned for the light. They consulted among themselves how they could be rid of their parents. Tumatuenga suggested that they should kill them but Tane Mahuta wanted to simply push them apart. All of the brothers agreed with Tane Mahuta except Tawhirimatea.

Rongo Ma Tane was the first to try to push their parents apart but he failed. Tongaroa then tried but also failed. So did Haumia Tikitike and Tumatuenga, but they also failed. Finally Tane Mahuta tried. Standing on his head, he used his legs to push his parents apart. For the first time light, Te Ao Marama, came into the world.

The main gods of the Maori pantheon

Tane Mahuta was the ancestor of trees, birds and insects. He also made the first woman, Hine Ahuone by fashioning her from clay. Their daughter was Hine Tiitama. Later she married her father. When she later found out he was her father she went and dwelt in the underworld where she became Hine Nui Te Po, the goddess of death.

Tumatuenga was the ancestor of human beings.

Tangaroa was the god of the ocean. He was the father of Punga, who in turn became the father of Ikitere and Tutewanawana. Ikitere was the father of fish and Tutewanawana was the father of reptiles.

With Hinetewaiwa Tongaroa had another son, Tongaroakiukiu. Tongaroakiukiu in turn had two daughters: Hine Raumati was the personification of Summer and Hine Takarua was the personification of Winter.

Hine Raumati and Tamanuitera had a son Tane Rore, who was the inventor of Kapa Haka.

Tamanuitera was the god of the sun

Rongo was the father of cultivated plants that was food for humans and Haumia Tikitiki was the father of uncultivated food plants.

Tawhirimatea was the god of wind, storms, thunder and lightning.

Urutengangana was the god of light. With his first wife, Moeahuru, he was the father of the sun and the moon. With his second wife he became the father of the stars.

Tawhirimatea’s Revenge

Tawhirimatea, who never agreed to the separation of Rangi and Papa, plans revenge on his brothers. He joins his father in the sky and sends storms to destroy the forests of Tane.

Tangaroa seeks safety in the ocean. The children of Ikitere, the fish, follow him, but the children of Tutewanawana, the reptiles, seek safety in the forests of Tane.

Tawhirimatea next attacks Rongo and Humia Tikitiki. However Papa, their mother, hides them from him inside the earth and his search for them is in vain.

Tumatuenga’s Revenge

Tumatuenga was angry at his brothers for not supporting him against Tawhirimatea and decided to take revenge on them.

He went into the forest and collected leaves from the whanake tree (cabbage tree) and twisted them into nooses. He used those to trap birds, the children of Tane.

He then collected flax leaves from which he made nets to trap fish, the children of Tongaroa.

Finally he dug up both the kumara and the non-cultivated edible plants, the children of Rongo and Haumia Tikitiki. These he cooked and ate.

Thereafter his children trap birds, catch fish and eat Kumara and other non-cultivated plants.

Ruamoko

Ruamoko was the youngest of the children of Rangi and Papa. He was also known as Ruaimokoroa.

At the time of their separation by Tane Mahuta, Ruamoko was still at his mother's breast.

To ameliorate their mother’s sorrow from having to look up continuously at Rangi, her children turned her face downwards. Ruamoko was therefore buried in the earth.

To keep them warm their children gave Papa fire from under the earth. Because of this Ruamoko became the god of the volcanoes. Also the earthquakes are supposed to be caused by Ruamoko moving around beneath the earth

Elsdon Best could not find any meaning of the name Ruamoko, apart from the first syllable Ru which means earthquake. According to him the alternative name Ruaimokoroa offered more possibilities. The second part of this name mokoroa could mean ‘big lizard’. According to this hypothesis Ruaimokoroa could mean a taniwha type being living in the subterranean regions of the earth. Earthquakes could easily be attributed to such a creature.

Dispute between Tangaroa and Tane Mahuta

As a result of Tawhirimatea's depredation the fish followed their ancestor Tangaroa to the sea but the reptiles fled into Tane's forests. Tangaroa is still angry with Tane for keeping his descendants away from him.

Tangaroa shows his anger by causing heavy waves to pound the land and overturning fishing vessels.

Tane retaliates by supplying flax to mankind so they can make nets to trap the children of Tangaroa. He also supplies timber so that they can make canoes and spears.

Panenehu and the Koura

Panenehu, a Maori chief, missed the foods of his homeland - especially koura (crayfish). After praying he was sent a koura drawn on a rock. In his dreams, he was told to take the drawing to the seashore and show it to Tangaroa, the sea god. In his rush to get to the shore, he dropped and smashed the rock but by using red clay he pieced it together. When the koura finally arrived they looked just like the broken image Panenehu had patched together. Today these ugly but delicious creatures can be found all around the New Zealand coast.

References and citations

The stamps 'Tane separates Rangi and Papa'and 'Panenehu shows Korua to Tangaroa' are produced with the permission of NZ Post. </p>

The image of Tawhirimatea comes from the <a href="https://teara.govt.nz/en/tawhirimatea-the-weather">Tawhirimatea page on the Te Ara website</a> and and appears with the kind permession of <a href="https://kiaatamai.org/"> Kia Ata Mai Educational Trust</a> website</p>

The image of Tangaroa comes from the <a href="https://teara.govt.nz/en/artwork/7393/tangaroa-and-dolphins">Tangaroa page on the Te Ara website</a> and and appears with the kind permession of <a href="https://kiaatamai.org/"> Kia Ata Mai Educational Trust</a> website</p>

The image of the eruption of Ngauruhoe was taken from the web site of <a href="https://www.gns.cri.nz/Home/Learning/Science-Topics/Volcanoes/New-Zealand-Volcanoes/Ngauruhoe">Ngauruhoe - New Zealand Volcanoes - GNS Science</a></p>

The images of the birds are from the <a href="https://organicmechanic.co.nz/blogs/theomblog/10-native-new-zealand-birds-you-should-know">Organic Mechanic website</a> </p>

The three geckos is a composite image from three images from the <a href="https://www.reptiles.org.nz/herpetofauna-index">New Zealand Herpetological Society website</a> </p>

For the stories of the separation of Rangi and Papa, the short description of the different Gods and the revenges taken by both Tawhirimatea and Tumatuenga are abbreviations of the much longer stories from <strong>Polynesian Mythology and Ancient Traditional History of the New Zealand Race</strong> by Sir George Grey available in the <a href="http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-GrePoly-c1-1.html">The New Zealand Electronic Text Collection</a> </p>

The image of Tamanuitera, the personification of the sum is an image by Arthuro Mann, downloaded from <a href="https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pacific\_Ocean\_At\_Acapulco\_1.jpg">Wikimedia Commons</a> </p>

The image of the cabbage tree comes from the <a href="https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/cordyline-australis/">New Zealand Plant Conservation Network</a> </p>

Finally the story of Ruamoko was sourced from Elsdon Best's book <strong>Maori Religion and Mythology Part I</strong> held in <a href="https://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Bes01Reli-t1-body-d4-d4-d10.html">The New Zealand Electronic Text Collection</a> </p>

I found the quirky story of Penenehu and the Koura on the <a href="http://virtualnewzealandstamps.blogspot.com/search/label/Maori%20Legends">Virtual New Zealand Stamps website.</a> Although I cannot find any trace of the same story anywhere else, I decided to use the version from the web site as an excuse for including the beautiful stamp. </p>

Images

















