



MAORI MYTHS

THE GREAT FISH OF MAUI

Maui was a demi-god, who lived in Hawaiiki. One day, he hid in his brothers' waka (boat) so he could go out fishing with them. Maui was discovered by his brothers, but he convinced them to continue on their journey.

Even though Maui's brothers' refused to give him bait for his hook, Maui used his own blood and dropped his magic matau (fishhook) over the side of the waka. He felt a strong tug on the line and after much straining and pulling, up surfaced a great fish. This fish was a piece of earth, the home of Tonganui, grandson of Tangaroa (god of the ocean).

Maui told his brothers that the Gods might be angry about this, and he asked his brothers to wait while he went to make peace with the Gods.

But once Maui had gone his brothers began to argue amongst themselves about the possession of this new land. The great fish writhed about and the brothers used their fish knives to cut into it's body creating the mountains and valleys of the land known today as the North Island of New Zealand, or Te Ika a Maui (the fish of Maui). The South Island is known as Te Waka a Maui, (the boat of Maui), and Stewart Island as Te Punga a Maui, (Maui's anchor).

WHATAITAI AND NGAKE

Wellington harbour is said to have originally been a great lake, and the opening passage out into the sea was created by two taniwha called Whātaimai and Ngāke. Whātaimai was a gentle easy-going taniwha who lived at the northern shallow end of the lake, while Ngāke who lived at the southern end was energetic and restless.

Ngāke decided to try and get free from the lake and swim in the ocean he could hear on the other side. He went to the northern corner of the lake, near Pito-one (Petone), wound himself up by twisting his tail like a giant spring and pushed off to the south.

Ngāke crashed into rock and earth at Seatoun, but smashed his way right through it out into the open sea. Bleeding and battered, Ngāke swam off into the deep waters of Raukawa moana (Cook Strait).

Whātaimai wanted to follow Ngāke and slowly pushed off from Ngauranga intending to join him. But he became stranded in the receding tides, let in by Ngāke, off Motu Kairangi (Miramar Pennisular). He stayed there for a long time, kept alive by the tides washing until a great earthquake lifted Whātaimai up, his skin dried out and he died. The Wellington suburb of Hataimai is named after him.

The wairua, soul of Whātaimai, left him in the form of a manu (bird), whose name was Te Keo. It flew to the hilltop Matairangi over the harbour, and began to tangi (weep) for Whātaimai. The peak was renamed Tangi-te-keo, after him, but is now known as Mount Victoria.