

An Australian Aborigine Creation Story

There was a time when everything was still. All the spirits of the earth were asleep - or almost all. The great Father of All Spirits was the only one awake. Gently he awoke the Sun Mother. As she opened her eyes a warm ray of light spread out towards the sleeping earth. The Father of All Spirits said to the Sun Mother,

"Mother, I have work for you. Go down to the Earth and awake the sleeping spirits. Give them forms."

The Sun Mother glided down to Earth, which was bare at the time and began to walk in all directions and everywhere she walked plants grew. After returning to the field where she had begun her work the Mother rested, well pleased with herself. The Father of All Spirits came and saw her work, but instructed her to go into the caves and wake the spirits.

This time she ventured into the dark caves on the mountainsides. The bright light that radiated from her awoke the spirits and after she left insects of all kinds flew out of the caves. The Sun Mother sat down and watched the glorious sight of her insects mingling with her flowers. However, once again the Father urged her on.

The Mother ventured into a very deep cave, spreading her light around her. Her heat melted the ice and the rivers and streams of the world were created. Then she created fish and small snakes, lizards and frogs. Next she awoke the spirits of the birds and animals and they burst into the sunshine in a glorious array of colors. Seeing this, the Father of All Spirits was pleased with the Sun Mother's work.

She called all her creatures to her and instructed them to enjoy the wealth of the earth and to live peacefully with one another. Then she rose into the sky and became the sun.

The living creatures watched the Sun in awe as she crept across the sky, towards the west. However when she finally sunk beneath the horizon they were panic-stricken, thinking she had deserted them. All night they stood frozen in their places, thinking that the end of time had come. After what seemed to them like a lifetime the Sun Mother peeked her head above the horizon in the East. The earth's children learned to expect her coming and going and were no longer afraid.

At first the children lived together peacefully, but eventually envy crept into their hearts. They began to argue. The Sun Mother was forced to come down from her home in the sky to mediate their bickering. She gave each creature the power to change their form to whatever they chose. However she was not pleased with the end result. The rats she had made had changed into bats; there were giant lizards and fish with blue tongues and feet. However the oddest of the new animals was an animal with a bill like a duck, teeth for chewing, a tail like a beavers and the ability to lay egg. It was called the platypus.

The Sun Mother looked down upon the Earth and thought to herself that she must create new creatures lest the Father of All Spirits be angered by what she now saw. She gave birth to two children. The god was the Morning Star and the goddess was the moon. Two children were born to them and these she sent to Earth. They became our ancestors. She made them superior to the animals because they had part of her mind and would never want to change their shape.¹

¹ http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths_13.html

The Maori Story of the Creation, version 1

In the beginning there was no sky, no sea, no earth and no Gods. There was only darkness, only Te Kore, the Nothingness. The very beginning was made from nothing. From this nothingness, the primal parents of the Māori came, Papatuanuku, the Earth mother, and Ranginui, the Sky father.

Papatuanuku and Ranginui came together, embracing in the darkness, and had 70 male children. These offspring became the gods of the Māori. However, the children of Papatuanuku and Ranginui were locked in their parents embrace, in eternal darkness, and yearned to see some light. They eventually decided that their parents should be separated, and had a meeting to decide what should be done.

They considered for a long time - should Rangi and Papa be killed? Or shall they be forced to separate?

Finally, Tumatauenga, the god of War, said "Let us kill our parents". However, Tane-Mahuta, the god of man and forests, and all which inhabits the forests, thought that Rangi and Papa should be separated. He thought that Ranginui should go up above, to the sky, and that Papatuanuku should go below, to dwell on earth. All the children, including Tu, the God of War, agreed with Tane.

Tawhiri Matea, the god of winds and storms was the only child who did not wish for his parents to be separated. He feared that his kingdom would be overthrown. One by one the children tried to separate their parents. Rongomatane, the god and father of cultivated foods, tried without success. Haumia Tiketike, god of uncultivated food also tried.

Then it was the turn of Tangaroa, the god of the sea, and Tumatauenga, the god of war, but neither Tangaroa nor Tumatauenga could separate their parents.

Lastly Tane-Mahuta rose. Strong as the kauri tree, he placed his shoulders against his mother Papatuanuku and his feet against his father Ranginui, and he pushed hard, for a very long time, straining and heaving all the while. Rangi and Papa cried in pain, asking their sons "why do you wish to destroy our love?"

After a long time Tane finally managed to separate Rangi and Papa, and for the first time the children saw the light of day (ao Marama) come streaming in. Once this happened, Tawhiri Matea, the god of winds and storms, and who had been against the separation of his parents, left for the sky to join his father.

The turbulent winds and storms on earth are caused by Tawhiri Matea, in revenge for this brother's acts.

Now that the separation of Papatuanuku and Ranginui was complete, and there was a sky and an earth. However, there was just one missing element, and Tane decided to create a female. From an area named Kura-waka Tane took some clay, and modeled it into a woman. He then breathed life into it, and created Hine-ahu-one - the earth formed maiden.

Tane and Hine had a beautiful daughter called Hinetitama. When Hinetitama grew, she had daughters to Tane. One day Hinetitama asked Tane who her father was, and on discovering that Tane was the father of her children, she fled with shame into the night, to a place called Rarohenga, the underworld. From then on she became known as Hine-nui-te-po, the goddess of the night.¹

¹ <http://www.scva.org.uk/pdfs/rightcol/169.pdf>

The Maori Story of the Creation, version 2

Io is known as the Supreme Being and ex nihilo (out of nothing) creator of the entire universe. He creates Ranginui (Rangi) and Papatuanuku (Papa), Sky Father and the Earth Mother, respectively. The sky and earth produce numerous offspring while they are physically, “cleaved together in a procreative embrace.” The children are forced to live in the darkness since their parents block all the rays from the sun. They soon become restless and worn out from the living conditions and gather to question whether to separate their parents or to kill them for more room and light.

The fiercest of the offspring, Tumatauenga (Tuma) voices his opinion for death, while Tanemahuta (Tane) wishes to just separate the mother and father so that the earth will “remain close as our nursing mother.” Most of the sons, including Tuma, finally agree with the plan for separation with a major dissenting vote from only one sibling, Tawhirimatea. As the guardian of winds and storms, he fears that his kingdom will be overthrown if the parents are torn apart. In the minority, Tawhirimatea remains silent and holds his breath.

The children begin to divide Rangi and Papa, and they soon realize their task is very difficult to accomplish. After many siblings attempt to separate the parents, Tane finally succeeds as he places his shoulders against the earth and his feet against the sky. He pushes slowly with both his upper and lower body with great strain. “Soon, and yet not soon, for the time was vast, the Sky and Earth began to yield.” The Earth Mother and Sky Father bleed and this gives rise to ochre (red clay), the sacred color of the Maoris. As the parents cry out for Tuma to stop, he only presses on harder. Sky Father and Earth Mother’s blood spills on his head, known as the kokowai, the sacred red earth that is created when the first blood spills at the dawn of time. Now that the separation is complete, there is a clearly defined sky and earth.

One of the offspring, Urutengangana, states that there is one element still missing, and he urges his siblings to find the female element, ira tangata, to enable the creation of woman. The search spans both land and sea, and Tane finally consults his mother, Papa, for her advice and knowledge. The earth takes pity on Tane and tells him to search an area named Kura-waka. Tane returns to his siblings with the new insight and they travel to the location. The children find the element in the Earth and dig it out to contribute in the creation of woman and her form. The elder siblings shape the body and the younger siblings add the flesh, fat, muscles, and blood. Tane then breathes life into it, and creates Hine-ahu-one, the earth formed maiden.¹

¹ <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/doherty/plan2/liangcreation.html>