

## TE MOANA – THE OCEAN

### Te Moana – Introduction

Our ancestors came from the sea and have retained an intimate relationship with coastal Wairarapa ever since. The sea, like the forest, is an encyclopaedia, a pantry and a chemist except this time all the contents are immersed in water.

Outside of the obvious importance of fishing for sustenance there are other significant aspects of our cultural practices that originate from the realm of Tangaroa. For example, carving is an important art form of our people. The stories of our ancestors are found in carved images. The art of carving was brought to our people from under the sea.

*The photo to the right shows where Lake Onoke empties into Palliser Bay  
Below: Seabed at Mataikona*



### Mana Whenua, Mana Moana

Mana whenua means the group of people that have authority over a defined area of land and Mana Moana applies to authority over the seas. A third part is mana tangata.

Today we hear a lot about mana whenua, mana moana and how you do not necessarily have both. Mana whenua is normally quoted before mana moana. This is not necessarily the correct order because Māori came to the land (whenua) from the sea (moana). Tangaroa, god of the sea, is the tuakana (elder brother) of Taane Mahuta (god that dwells on the land) in both the birth sequence and size. It should also be remembered that the land comes from the sea and returns back to it. Whether this is through erosion on the coast or via the wai tapu (rivers) that carry the land and then empty into the sea.

The sea and the land cannot be separated, each has its own healing powers, each has its own food and each has its own wairua tapu. Each of the gods has his own individual kawa (protocol) that connects with his brothers. Even the land and the sea merge, at no point is there a void, the land mass moves under the seawaters where they connect until the continental shelf drops off. For our people on the east coast this means that the land eventually gives way to Te Moana Nui a Kiwa (The Pacific Ocean) but it does not mean that one is placed over the other.

Interestingly, the intertidal zone that includes the rocky shore and sand dunes is considered the place where all of the gods merge. This is why pre-European Māori burial sites are often found in coastal dunes. Imagine that further inland Tane releases his trees into the rivers, these are carried down to the ocean where Tangaroa is waiting. They are lashed by the waves (Tangaroa), the fierce winds (Tawhirimatea) and the rains (Ranginui). Eventually they are thrown up on the beaches (Papatūānuku) and found as driftwood amongst the dunes. The deceased were buried here in the arms of the combined gods.

## Hi Ika

Fish come in many shapes and sizes. There are salt water fish and freshwater ones although the first thing to point out is that when discussing freshwater fish is that the fin fish that fall within this description actually spend parts of their life in salt water. In short, the adult fish swim to the sea to spawn in autumn while juveniles make their way inland during the spring. Along the way each fish encounters a range of other life forms and the elements that either assist or hinder its journey.

Our tupuna had attained an advanced understanding of the life cycles of the fish that they caught for food. They knew that with the first signs of winter approaching fish would start their journeys from inland waterways down to the coastal river mouths. In the autumn cooler air temperatures gave the adults a signal to begin moving downstream, whereas in spring the melting snows told juveniles to move up stream.

All native fish needed clear passages to and from inland waterways so that they could reach breeding grounds at estuaries or in the sea.

Adult fish prepared for migrations months beforehand. They would eat additional quantities of food and store this as fat within their stomachs. This fat caused the roe (eggs) to grow to such an extent that it could fill the stomach cavity.

Fish did not mind storms because high tides and dirty water was beneficial to their cycle. Before a storm, the bottom of rivers and sand was stirred up providing food for fish. Murky waters gave fish an opportunity to move without being detected by predators. A storm could wash away a sandbank blocking a river thereby helping passage out to sea.

Spring tides pushed water further up onto land than normal high tides. Some fish laid their eggs on grasses at the waters edge. When assisted to go further up on banks away from the main body of water the eggs would then lay dormant away from other predators. When the next spring tide came the larvae would be washed out to sea where they would feed on zooplankton over the winter. When it was spring the flow of the water assisted the juvenile fish to move back into the river. The small fish would move up the outside edges of rivers, where the warmer water is, into quiet bush covered streams where they would grow by feeding on insects.

Ngāti Hāmua fished during the migration periods of the fish. They knew that the roe was fattest at these times and so the maximum nutritional value could be derived from the fish. Often fishing was undertaken at night because this was when the fish came out to eat. Places such as the Whareama and Mataikona rivers were targeted during annual migrations.

The methods used to trap fish required the use of natural materials. Blind trenches were dug before or after rapids and bends on the rivers. This was to trick the fish into resting or taking a short cut. Groynes were constructed using stones to make a wall out into the centre of the river to trap fish. A part of the river would be blocked off but one or a number of holes would be left for the fish to get through. Unbeknown to the fish was that a net waited on the other side. At other times hoop nets were employed to scoop the fish from the water.

The fish were stored in harakeke baskets that not only held them securely but also allowed the contents to breathe. Much of the food caught was not eaten immediately but preserved by drying for leaner months. Drying racks were constructed using timber and even stones were used to dry fish on in the warm sun.

## Tuakana/Teina

Our kaumātua ask the question “Who is the tuakana (elder)? Papatūānuku or Tangaroa?” The answer is Tangaroa because our people came from the sea, from Hawaiki to this land. Therefore it came first.

When our kaumātua recite their whaikorero on a marae they first pay homage to the sea, to Tangaroa god of the sea and all the living creatures in it and Hinemoana, the sea guardian and wife of Kiwa.

## Kai moana

The following are the major species of sea-life that were utilised as food by Ngāti Hāmua.

**Intertidal fish** - inanga, kahawai, karoro (cockle), koaro, kōkopu (native trout varieties), kuku (-a) or mussel, patiki (flounder), patiki rori (sole), tio (pacific oysters) and whitebait (juveniles of various fish species).

**Saltwater fish** – haku (kingfish *Seriola grandis*), hoka or hokarari (ling *Genypterus blacodes*), humenga (wandering sea anemone), kāeo (sea tulip or monkey nuts *Pyura pachydermatum*), kina (sea urchin *Evechinus chloroticus*), kōpuputai roa (long finger sponge), kōtore moana (red sea anemone), kōura (crayfish *Jasus* spp.), kumukumu (gurnard *Chelidonichthys kumu*), mako (mako shark *Isurus glaucus*), mangā (barracouta *Thyrsites atun*), mangō tuatini (white shark), mararī (butterfish), ngākihi (limpet *Cellana* spp.), ngōiro (conger eel), pāpaka ura (large rock crab), papatai, pātangatanga (sun starfish), pāua (*Haliotis* spp.), pekepeke (dogfish), piharau (lamprey), pioke or pioka (shark, rig), pipi (cockle *Paphies australis*), pūpū (catseye, winkle *Lunella* spp.), rāwaru (blue cod), rērere (small rock crab), rori (sea cucumber *Scutus breviculus* or warty sea slug), tāmure (snapper), tarakihi (*Nemadactylus* spp.), tuangi (NZ cockle *Austrovenus stutchburyi*), tope (school shark), tuere (hagfish), turret shell, upokohue (pilot whale *Globocephala*), whai manu (eagle ray), and wheke (octopus *O maorum*).



NZ Paua shell pictured above

### Quick quiz – Te Moana

1. Who is known as the guardian of the sea?
2. Who is her husband?
3. What is the Māori name for the Pacific Ocean?
4. Why is the sea referred to here as a chemist?
5. What are the Māori names for the following species – flounder, octopus, conger eel and blue cod?

Answers at the back of booklet

### Key Points – Te Moana

- Ngāti Hāmua maintain that Tangaroa is the tuakana;
- In our whaikorero, homage is always paid to Tangaroa first as this is where our ancestors came from; and
- The sea is viewed as a source of food, medicine and learning.