female life forces. Faro flooded all of the land containing the impure seed of his brother. Only the good were saved in Faro’s ark, and he taught them proper ways and how to make and keep the shrines.

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It is possible that the figure of Faro was influenced by the Christian stories brought to Africa by missionaries. He is sacrificed, like Jesus, to atone for the sins of others—in this case, his twin brother, a Devil figure. As the animistic source of creation, however, he fits a traditional mold of animistic peoples—especially in Africa and North America. The culture hero, the one who brings knowledge, literally becomes creation in this mold. It is also clear that the highly spiritual Faro represents the powers of the Nyamakalaw Mandeans, whereas his twin, Pemba, contains all that is selfish and non-spiritual in humans.

See Also: Ancestors in Creation, Animistic Creation, Cosmic Egg in Creation, Creation from Chaos, Culture Heroes in Creation, Devil in Creation, Dismemberment of Primordial Being as Creation, Duality in Creation, Ex Nihilo Creation, Fall from Grace in Creation, Flood in Creation Myths, Four Directions in Creation, Imperfect or Accidental Creation, Incest in Creation, Sacrifice in Creation, Twins in Creation.

Reference and Further Reading


MAORI

The Maori are a Polynesian people who have inhabited New Zealand since long before the arrival of Europeans. While their sacred stories resemble those of other Polynesians, such as the Samoans and Tahitians, the Maori mythology, like those of their cultural relatives, is sufficiently different to justify separate treatment. The Maori religious and mythological system concerns itself with profound spiritual matters and the nature of Being itself.

In many parts of New Zealand the creation myth does not say much, if anything, about the supreme being, Io (Iho). Sometimes, like so many creation myths, it begins with a primordial unity that must be separated—differentiated—so that creation can take place.

Tiki or Hei Tiki, carving representing the first man in Polynesian mythology. (© Suzanne Long / Alamy)
The Maori cosmogony usually begins, then, with the union of Rangi (Heaven) and Papa (Earth). There are several versions of this myth. The one that follows does also speak of Io.

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In the beginning there was darkness and water, where Io lived alone and was inactive. In order to become active, Io uttered words calling on darkness to become “light-possessing darkness.” So came light. When Io called for the light to become “dark-possessing light,” darkness returned. Day and night had been born. Io continued creating with words—the “ancient and original sayings, which caused growth from the void.”

Io called on the waters to separate and the heavens to be formed. Then Io became the gods. Most important, he created Rangi and Papa—Sky Father and Earth Mother—who cleaved together in a procreative embrace, crowding their offspring. Two of these, Rongo and Tane, created plants, forests, and insects. Tane separated his parents to make more room; he was the god of life. Rangi and Papa were so sad to be separated that to this day Rangi drops tears on Papa and Papa’s sighs rise as mist to her spouse.

Other children of the first parents were the winds, rains, earthquakes, and Tu, the warrior god who wanted to kill his eternally coupling parents and whose children are the fearless Maori. The 10th child of Rangi and Papa was Tanga-roa, the father of the hero Maui. Some say that the sun is the eye of Maui and that the eyes of his children became the evening and morning stars. Others say that Maui was thrown into the sea by his moon mother, Taranga, and rescued by Io, who hung him on the roof of his house.

The Maoris call New Zealand the Fish of Maui. Maui gave fire to humans, and died in a search for immortality. He needed to make that search because the last child of Rangi and Papa brought death to the world.

The first Maori was made by the god Tane out of red clay. Some say that it was the god Tiki who made the first man in his own image, and thus he named him Tiki, after himself.

***

The Maori creation myth is a metaphor for all types of creation, whether human or cosmic. It is for this reason that the ritual words by which Io made the world are still used today to help in the conception of a child, in the composition of a poem, or in the renewal of a broken mind or spirit.

The following is an example of a Maori ritual creation chant:

From the conception the increase,
From the increase the thought,
From the thought the remembrance,
From the remembrance the consciousness,

From the consciousness the desire.

The world became fruitful;
It dwelt with the feeble glimmering;
It brought forth night:
The great night, the long night,
The lowest night, the loftiest night.
The thick night, to be felt,
The night to be touched,
The night not to be seen,
The night of death.

From the nothing the begetting,
From the nothing the increase, 
From the nothing the abundance, 
The power of increasing
The living breath:
It dwelt with the empty space,
And produced the atmosphere which
is above us,
The atmosphere which floats above
the earth;
The great firmament above us dwelt
with the early dawn,
And the moon sprung forth;
The atmosphere above us dwelt with
the heat,
And thence proceeded the sun;
They were thrown up above,
As the chief eyes of Heaven:
Then the Heavens became light,
The early dawn, the early day,
The mid-day.
The blaze of day from the sky. (See
Taylor version in Reed)

MAPUCHE

The Mapuche are the largest indigenous
group in what is now Chile. Called Araucanos by the Spanish conquistadors and
their descendants, the Mapuche resisted
the Spaniards for centuries and have been
centralized since the independence of
Chile from Spain. Their name suggests
their central belief. Mapuche literally
means “People [che] of the land [mapu].
There are several versions of their cre-
ation myth told by various branches of
the Mapuche people. What follows is a
series of fragments.

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I the beginning there was only dark-
ness and water until the creator made a
world and put people on it—people into
whom the creator imbued his spirit. . . .
Woman was created first, then, from a
star, man to be her companion. . . .

There were two essential powers—
embodied as serpents. There was Treng
Tren (Tren Tren), the earth serpent, and
Kai Kai, the water serpent. Sometimes
there was war between the serpents and
once Kai Kai flooded the world. A few
Mapuche climbed a mountain as in-
structed by Tren Treng and were saved.

The survivors, say some, were two
couples—an old man and woman to
teach the old ways and a young couple
to procreate.

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The Mapuche believe that the very
basis of proper life is a harmonious re-
relationship between people, animals, and
the land—that is Mother Earth. The cen-
trality of Mother Earth is reflected in