

ART. XXXIV.—*Maori Origins.*

By ELSDON BEST.

[Read before the Auckland Institute, 6th November, 1899.]

THE following disconnected notes on Maori origins have been culled from many manuscript books in my possession containing a great amount of matter concerning the mythology, history, &c., of the Maori people of New Zealand. The search for and gathering-together of such sporadic notes requires a considerable amount of time, and when put together they do not make a by any means harmonious whole, but I hold that we who dwell in the dark places of the earth should strive but to collect and place on record all such matter, and leave higher forms of compilation and all generalising to those who have no means of obtaining such matter at first hand—or to a future generation.

ORIGIN OF THE WORLD.

According to the Maori cosmogony the world grew from primal chaos, darkness, and nothingness. The genesis or growth of the world has been likened to that of a tree. Names are given of primal beings who brought forth offspring of a like nature, even until Rangi and Papa (heaven and earth) were born or came into existence. It would, however, appear probable that these primal names represent periods of time rather than beings of an anthropomorphous type. From Te Pu (the very origin) sprang Te More (the tap-root). From Te More sprang Te Weu (the rootlets or fibrous roots). Then came Te Āka (the creeper or vine). Then Te Rea (the increase). Then Te Wao-nui (the great forest or tree). Then followed Te Kune (the forming, the conception). Then Te Whe or Wheke, which represented sound. Then Te Kore (void) and Te Po (darkness).

Born of the void and darkness were Rangi and Papa, the Sky Father, the Earth Mother. From these sprang Tane, Tu, Rongo, Wainui, and Tangotango. Tane is the origin of forests, the tutelary deity of birds and trees. Tu is the supreme god of war, while Rongo presides over the food-products and the arts of peace. Tangotango is the cause or origin of night and day, while Wainui is the mother of waters, the origin and personification of streams, lakes, and the great ocean.

From Tangotango sprang the sun, the moon, the stars, and phosphorescent light. Tangaroa, the Polynesian Neptune, is

said by some to have been born of Rangi and Papa, by others to have been the offspring of Tane and Hine-rauamoa. Another child of Tane was Hine-te-iwaiwa, who was the origin of the art of weaving, and is patroness and tutelary deity of the Whare Pora, or weaving-house. She is also invoked in matters connected with childbirth.

Another wondrous being of the misty past was Ruaumoko. He is the origin or cause of earthquakes and the change of seasons. When the descendants of the Sky and of Mother Earth quarrelled and were separated and dispersed, then Ruaumoko was sent below to the under world, where he still is. When he turns over, that is the origin of earthquakes, and he changes the seasons by turning the warmth or cold uppermost. Should a Maori feel an earthquake, say towards the close of winter, he will say, "The warmth has been turned uppermost; warm weather is coming."

ORIGIN OF DEATH.

Maui, the demi-god, and Hine-nui-te-Po, Goddess of Hades or the under world, strove together as to whether death should be allowed to assail mankind. Maui held that man should but die as the moon dies—that is, that when his strength and faculties waned he should return to youth and vigour by bathing in the life-giving waters of Tane. But Hine said, "Not so. Let life be short for man and death eternal, that he may be wailed over and lamented." And Maui heard that Hine was slaying mankind by means of her dread arts, and as she slew men (through the wizards of old) this was the invocation heard:—

Ka kukuti
Ka kukuti nga puapua o Hine-nui-te-Po
Ka whai toremi.

Then the thought came to Maui that he would gain eternal life for man. He would descend to the realm of Hine and endeavour to wrest from her this great prize for man; for so should his name go ringing down the ages. He would enter the body of the dread goddess and obtain her *ngakau*. So should man retain life and know not death.

The word "*ngakau*" means the entrails, but also is used for the seat of affection and of pain. Thought proceeds from the *ngakau*. To the old-time Maori the emotions were seated in the *ngakau*, or *ate* (liver), or *puku* (stomach), and to a certain extent in the *manawa* (heart), as observed in the expression *manawa wera*, seared, or, rather, inflamed, heart, used to denote anger or indignation. Some authorities state that it was the *manawa* (heart) of Hine which Maui strove to possess himself of. *Manawa* is the material heart, or the breath. The

manawa (heart) is the origin and seat of all knowledge, power, intellectuality. It imparts strength or vigour to the emotions and thinking-power of man. It is the origin of strength, physical and mental. The eight *pu manawa* of man are what we should term eight talents. As old Tamarau of Tuhoë watched a man dispose of three large glasses of beer in quick succession he said, "*Ko te manawa o te pakeha, he pia*"—i.e., "Beer is the source of the white man's strength (or vigour)." *Manawa* is also used in another sense. In speaking of a child recently dead a man said, "The *manawa ora* has departed, the *ahua* (semblance) alone remains." Here, I take it, the *manawa ora* means the breath of life. Again, when the notorious Makurata case occurred at Galatea the *kuia* said to one who vainly tried to save her from the Pu Taewa and Christianity, "You are my *manawa ora*." Here the term really meant "salvation" or "hope"—that is, the one who gave her strength.

Anyhow, Maui failed in his greatest and final task, and was slain by the remorseless Goddess of Hades. Hence death came into the world. This also was the origin of wailing and lamentation for the dead.

The origin of treachery was the slaying of Tutunui by Kau-niho-haha (or Kae), for an account of which see Grey's "Polynesian Mythology."

The origin of cursing was Rona. When she went to obtain water at night she cursed the moon for not showing more light, hence she and her sister were taken by the moon, where you may still see them.

ORIGIN OF THEFT.

Far away in the land of Mataora dwelt Pani-tinaku, wife of Rongo-maui. Pani was a sister of Tangaroa-i-te-rupetu, who was father of the Maui brothers. The fame of the *kumara* (sweet potato) came from afar, and Rongo-maui went forth and visited the regions of the sky, where Whanui* dwells, for Whanui it is who gives the *kumara* to mankind. And as Rongo-maui ascended to the sky he repeated the following invocation:—

E Para E !
 Tukua atu au kia puta
 Ki tawhangawhanga nui
 No Rangī, no Papa
 He aio.

When Rongo reached Whanui he said, "I have come for some of our children (the *kumara*), that I may take them back to Mataora with me." But Whanui said, "I will not consent

* Whanui = the star Vega.

to their being taken." Then Rongo retired, and in doing so managed to secure some of the *kumara* by stealth, which same he brought back to Mataora with him. Such was the origin of theft.

The foregoing is an interesting legend when studied in its entirety. According to the old-time Maori it was Whanui (Vega) which gave unto them the *kumara* (sweet potato). When Whanui first appeared in the east the wise men pronounced the *kumara*-crop as ready to be taken up. It is possible that the Polynesians first obtained the *kumara* from South America, in which direction Whanui rises.

ORIGIN OF WAR.

The real origin of war was the quarrel between the sons of Rangi and Papa, when Tane, Tu, Tangaroa, and Tawhirimatea strove against each other on account of the cultivation known as Pohutukawa, which, according to the aged Hamiora Pio, of Ngati-awa, meant the world. The offspring of Earth and Sky were struggling for possession of the fair earth. Rongo was the peace-maker. Had man but followed the advice of Rongo then would war have been an unknown quantity in this world, and all would have followed the arts of peace. Rongo was the origin of cultivation and of cultivated food-products. Pani gave birth to the *kumara* and made it known to mankind, but it existed before that time in far-distant lands.

I take it that Rongo was the mythological origin of the *kumara*, but that the Pani and Rongo-maui legend is a distorted account of the obtaining of the *kumara* from the east, and, as Whanui rises in that quarter, it came to be said that Rongo-maui had visited Whanui in order to obtain the valued food-product.

The quarrel of the sons of Earth and Sky is said by some to have arisen over the house known as Te Tatau-o-rangiriri. But Rongo and Ioio-whenua and Putehue were averse to war, and so migrated to Whitiwhiti-ora. But the fierce struggle between Tane (origin or tutelary deity of trees and birds) and Tangaroa (Neptune) was most bitter. Myriads were slain on either side. Tane destroyed the offspring of Tangaroa by means of net and hook. The tribes of Tane fell before the snares of Tangaroa. And, yet more dreadful, each ate of the other's dead. Such was the origin of cannibalism. So war raged across the earth, and many troubles afflicted mankind.

The origin of revenge was the act of Tawhaki, who ascended to the heavens in order to enlist the services of the hosts of the skies to aid him in avenging the death of his parent Takotako, who had been slain by the tribes known as Te Papaka-

wheoro and Te Tini-o-te-makahua. These people also seriously injured Tawhaki, by burning him at the place called Tarahana.

The origin of the whirlwind was the rainbow-god Kahukura. This rainbow is always a double one. The brilliant one underneath is the female; her name is Tu-awhio-rangi. The male is Kahukura. Their offspring is the whirlwind which gyrates through space. When we see the whirlwind it is a sign that visitors are coming. The rainbow is a weather-sign of the Maori people. The parents or origin of the rainbow are the *imu-rangi* seen on the horizon and Tuhi-rangi (the redness of the horizon).

When Tawhaki ascended to the heavens in order to gather the legions of men and dogs therein, he demanded of Whaitiri that the thunder of heaven should resound. This was the origin of the great power possessed by the priests of old, who could cause the thunder to roll at their call.

ART. XXXV.—*A Name for a Spider.*

BY EDWARD TREGGAR.

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MANY investigators are leaving behind them the school that teaches how, in the study of modern savages, light on the customs of the ancients may be found. Almost every thorough inquiry into the beliefs and customs of supposed barbarians seems to convince one how little we know of them, and how little they know of the origins of their own practices. Publications lately issued on the subject of the native tribes of Australia have thrown a dazzling search-light on our ignorance concerning those tribes, and serve to show that, instead of low savages, easily understood, and with no religious beliefs worth speaking of, they are in possession of institutions which, as regards their theology, marriage-rites, initiations, &c., have imbued them with notions of the most complex nature. They have apparently in an abraded or worn-down form mystical ceremonies and beliefs compared with which an ordinary European's guiding courses of conduct are simplicity itself. Moreover, they, by a thousand lines of direction, appear to point to highly organized systems in the remote past, and therefore for us to regard such people as primitive unspoilt children of nature, in whose artless habits may be read the