

Maori Spirituality

◆ Gives Life Meaning

◆ TAPU

◆ How should I live
my life

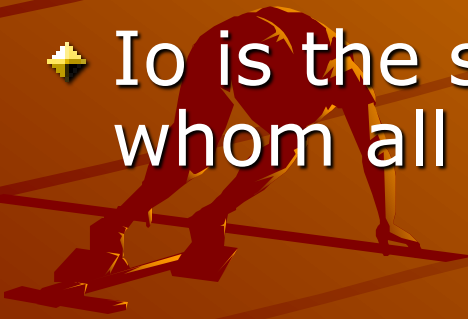
◆ Pattern of
celebration



Gives Life Meaning

- ◆ In the beginning the belief was that the god Tane offered mankind three baskets of knowledge - "Nga Kete-o-te-Wananga". Within these baskets were the stories of creation, instructions concerning magic, etc. The Māori believe all living things are descended from the Gods, embodied within certain mountains, rivers and lakes.

- ◆ All things have a type of soul - the wairua. This is why the Māori have strong spiritual ties to the land.
- ◆ The origin of life is explained by a long process of movement with human being coming at the end of the process.
- ◆ Io is the supreme being at the heart of all whom all things have their origin.



- ◆ Certain geographical features of New Zealand are important anchors for Māori identity.
- ◆ For example, the Wanganui River has a particular cultural and spiritual significance for the Māori. Most things contain "mana" - spiritual essence. Mana is within man himself, land, nature, and also man-made objects. Contact with mana contained objects or beings by non-authorised persons or objects could cause the mana to be drained away.

How should I live my life

- ◆ The Māori are the tangata whenua – the people of the land and consider themselves guardians of the land and all their decisions are based on the fact that they are in a relationship with Io, the land and each other.



TAPU

- ◆ Tapu is the strongest force in Māori life. It has numerous meanings and references. Tapu can be interpreted as "sacred", or defined as "spiritual restriction" or "implied prohibition", containing a strong imposition of rules and prohibitions. A person, an object or a place, which is tapu, may not be touched by human contact. A person, object or a place could be made sacred by tapu for a certain time, and the two main types of tapu were private and public.

- ◆ In earlier times, tribal members of a higher rank would not touch objects which belonged to members of a lower rank. This was considered "pollution". Similarly, persons of a lower rank could not touch the belongings of a highborn person. Death was the penalty.
- ◆ A breach of "tapu" was to commit a hara (violation) could incur the wrath of the Gods. Certain objects were particularly tapu, so much so that it was a dangerous act to even touch them, apart from suitably qualified priests.

- ✦ In earlier times food cooked for a chief was tapu, and could not be eaten by an inferior. A chief's house was tapu, and even the chief could not eat food in the interior of his house. A woman could not enter a chief's house unless a special religious ceremony was performed. (the karakia)
- ✦ An ariki (chief) and a tohunga (healer or priest) were lifelong tapu persons. Two other types of tapu were "rahui and "aukati", but "tapu" itself was the most powerful, the most important, and the most far reaching into Māori life. Today, tapu observances are still in evidence concerning sickness, death, and burial. Tapu is also evident in the Marae and in the Whare.

Pattern of celebration

- ◆ Māori celebrate ritual with karakia to bridge the gap between the secular world and the spiritual.
- ◆ Karakia are the chants of Maori ritual. They often call on the atua and are a means of participation, of becoming one, with the atua and the ancestors and with events of the past in the 'eternal present' of ritual.

◆ These chants or prayers are the words of the ancestors. The five major prayers deal with family, canoe, food (kumara), war and death.

◆ The five minor prayers are weather, sickness, fishing, hunting and love.

◆ Karakia is only one example.