

# CREATION NARRATIVES OF MAHINGA KAI

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## Māori customary food-gathering sites and practices

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### Abstract

Mahinga kai, Māori customary food-gathering sites and practices, emerged at the beginning of the creation narratives when the Māori world was first formed and atua roamed upon the face of the land. This paper critically evaluates the emergent discourses of mahinga kai within key Māori creation narratives that stem from the Māori worldview. The narratives selected for analysis were the following three creation narratives: the separation of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku, the retribution of Tū-mata-uenga and the creation of humanity. The multiple discourses that emerge from these narratives involved mahinga kai as whakapapa, whanaungatanga, tikanga with the subsequent discourse of tapu, kaitiakitanga with the subsequent discourse of mauri and mātauranga. A discursive analysis of mahinga kai in Māori creation narratives confirms mahinga kai as an expression of Māori worldview and reveals a myriad of understandings.

### Keywords

mahinga kai, customary food gathering, creation narratives, Māori worldview

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## Introduction

Customary food-gathering sites and practices are fundamental to many Indigenous peoples worldwide (United Nations, 2009). The ability for Indigenous peoples to collect and maintain their connection to and sustainable use of these practices underpins positive conceptualisations of identity, health and wellbeing (King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009; Panelli & Tipa, 2009). Furthermore, these practices are underpinned by unique worldviews, from which diverse knowledge systems and cultural paradigms emerge. Within an Aotearoa New Zealand (hereafter referred to as New Zealand) context, an example of customary food-gathering sites and practices is encapsulated in the phrase *mahinga kai*.

*Mahinga kai* has multiple interpretations. Broadly, *mahinga kai* is described as a traditional Māori food-gathering practice with significance also attached to food-gathering sites, with “*mahinga*” meaning “sites denoting work” and “*kai*” meaning “food”. “*Mahinga*” incorporates the verb “*mahi*”, meaning “to work”; “*ngā*” is a suffix that converts a verb into a noun and thus “*mahinga*” literally means “the work” (“*Mahinga*”, 2003). Another interpretation divides “*mahinga*” into its three syllables: “*mā*” means “white” or “light”, “*hī*” means to draw up and “*ngā*” is linked with “*kai*” to form a plural (“the foods”). This interpretation sees *mahinga kai* as an unearthing and drawing up of the light to feed our bodies physically and spiritually (R. Davis, personal communication, May 19, 2014). The importance of *mahinga kai* to *iwi*, *hapū* and *whānau* goes beyond any cursory definition, however; it was a livelihood, an identity, a part of the people.

*Mahinga kai* is therefore an expression of a Māori worldview. The Māori worldview is a paradigm of Māori culture from which stems the Māori belief and value system (Royal, 1998); it is how Māori perceive the “ultimate reality and meaning” (Marsden, 2003a, p. 3). Marsden (2003a) explains further:

The worldview is the central systemisation of conceptions of reality to which members of its culture assent and from which stems their value system. The worldview lies at the heart of the culture, touching, interacting with and strongly influencing every aspect of the culture. (p. 56)

Essential to a Māori worldview are creation narratives (Jackson, 2011; Marsden, 2003b). Creation narratives convey myth messages that form the belief and value system of people, governing their everyday practices and norms (Ka'ai & Higgins, 2004; Marsden, 2003b). Jackson (2011) warns that multiple versions of creation narratives exist among *iwi* and *hapū*; however, “the stories that revolve around them have a common thread or theme running through them” (Marsden, 2003b, p. 55).

The American scholar Joseph Campbell (2004) provides another layer of understanding of the roles of myth and narrative, and identifies four functions of myth: (1) “to reconcile consciousness to the preconditions of its own existence . . . to evoke in the individual a sense of grateful, affirmative awe before the monstrous mystery that is existence”; (2) “to present an image of the cosmos . . . that will maintain and elicit the experience of awe”; (3) “to validate and maintain a certain sociological system, a shared set of rights and wrongs”; and (4) “to carry the individual through the stages of life from birth through maturity through senility to death” (pp. 5–8). This paper is concerned with the first three of Campbell’s functions.

While the connections between *mahinga kai*, the Māori worldview and creation narratives are known anecdotally, there are few papers where these connections are made explicit. Patterson (1994) examines the concept of *whanaungatanga* embedded in Māori creation narratives, while Jackson (2011) analyses the connection between creation narratives and the Māori worldview within a fisheries context. Marsden (2003a, 2003b, 2003c) similarly highlights the importance of creation narratives for framing a

Māori worldview; however, a deep understanding of mahinga kai is not gained from these works. This paper therefore contributes to our understanding of the depth and breadth of mahinga kai, which emerges from Māori creation narratives that stem from a Māori worldview.

The three creation narratives examined here are the separation of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku, the retribution of Tū-mata-uenga and the creation of humanity. The discussion that follows is our interpretation of these narratives in relation to their discourses of mahinga kai. The narratives were analysed utilising Fairclough's (2003) concept of emergence, which derives from critical discourse analysis (CDA), in conjunction with whakapapa, which derives from kaupapa Māori theory. Mahinga kai is embedded in a framework of cosmogonic whakapapa encoded within Māori creation narratives that express a Māori worldview. The aim of this paper is to identify the emergent discourses of mahinga kai within these three creation narratives to provide a platform for interpreting a Māori worldview.

### **Methodological approach: Kaupapa Māori theory and CDA**

Kaupapa Māori theory and CDA were used as both the theoretical and the methodological frameworks of the study. Specifically, the concept of whakapapa (deriving from kaupapa Māori theory) and emergence (deriving from CDA) were employed to interpret the creation narratives as they pertain to the discourses of mahinga kai. Fairclough (2003) describes how discourses within texts emerge through themes. The narratives were analysed to identify the main themes and these were then categorised into discourses—the emergent discourses of mahinga kai.

Kaupapa Māori theory is “a distinctive approach which stems from a Māori worldview” (Moewaka Barnes, 2000, p. 9) and reflects the underlying principles or aspects based on

this worldview (Smith, 2003). Kaupapa Māori theory is grounded in advancing Māori beliefs and knowledge systems and creates a safe space to explore things Māori within the academy (Smith, 2003, 2012). CDA is similar to kaupapa Māori theory in that it has shared aims of transformation and social change (Jackson, 2011, 2015). The use of CDA in conjunction with kaupapa Māori theory builds on Jackson's (2011, 2013, 2015) research that confirms the validity of employing these methods of research in order to “further the aspirations of the Māori community” she worked with (Jackson, 2015, p. 2).

CDA is both a theory and a method, which interrogates ideologies and power relations involved in discourse (Fairclough, 2010). This paper utilises Fairclough's interpretation of CDA (Fairclough, 2001, 2003, 2009, 2010; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Weiss & Wodak, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2009), which analyses discourses or “ways of representing aspects of the world” that emerge from texts (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124). Furthermore, CDA researchers tackle resistance and imagine ways and possibilities for social change and emancipation (Fairclough, 2009)—a similar goal to that of kaupapa Māori theory (Jackson, 2011, 2013, 2015).

### ***Whakapapa and emergence of discourse***

Whakapapa as a methodology has been described as an analytical tool Māori use to make sense of the nature, origin, connection, relationship and locating of phenomena (Royal, 1998); as “a basis for the organisation of knowledge in respect of the creation and development of all things” (Barlow, 1991, p. 173); and as a way of ordering, thinking, storing, debating and acquiring new knowledge which links the past, present and future (Graham, 2005, 2009). Whakapapa therefore examines the origin of all things and thus their connectedness across time and space.

Fairclough's (2009, 2010) concept of emergence has similarities with whakapapa. According to Fairclough (2010), emergence is "the processes of emergence of new discourses, their constitution as new articulations of elements of existing discourses" (p. 618). He explains that emergence "is approached on the principle that nothing comes out of nothing—new discourses emerge through 'reweaving' relations between existing discourses" (p. 619). This is comparable to whakapapa, which is rooted in the intricate connectedness of all things in space and time. Everything has a whakapapa or familial origin; likewise, the emergence of discourses stem from pre-existing discourses that blend to create a "new" discourse (Fairclough, 2010; Jackson, 2011, 2015). Like whakapapa, emergence is a genealogical approach, and thus is an appropriate means of analysing Māori creation narratives.

Jackson (2015) argues that integrating kaupapa Māori theory and CDA creates a synergy that operationalises the research process and "demonstrates the importance of utilising theoretical tools that allow researchers to unpack complex discursive and social relations" (p. 264). Following this approach, the subsequent sections are a combination of results, analysis and discussion of the discourses of mahinga kai that emerge from three creation narratives. The three creation narratives were selected for analysis because of their widespread familiarity and relevance to mahinga kai.

### **A discursive analysis of mahinga kai creation narratives**

A discursive analysis of the selected creation narratives reveals the depth and breadth of mahinga kai and shows how mahinga kai reflects a Māori worldview. This paper takes a similar approach to Jackson (2013), who employed a discursive analysis of rangatiratanga in Waitangi Tribunal reports and in the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Jackson also employed Fairclough's

interpretation of CDA, utilising the concept of emergence to identify the multiple discourses of rangatiratanga within a fisheries context through the analysis of relevant narratives. The narratives selected for analysis in this paper are the separation of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku (Grey, 1965; I. Heke, personal communication, September 17, 2014; Patterson, 1994; Reilly, 2004), the retribution of Tū-mata-uenga (Grey, 1965; Patterson, 1994; Reilly, 2004) and the creation of humanity (Grey, 1965; H. Hakopa, personal communication, November 3, 2014; Patterson, 1994; Reilly, 2004).

The Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku separation narrative depicts the creation of Te Ao Mārama, the emergence of the world of light and day through the separation of the primordial parents. Coming after the separation of the primordial parents, the second narrative depicts the aftermath of the separation through the retribution of Tū-mata-uenga. This narrative, for the most part, involves the children of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku. It is of particular importance to mahinga kai, as the story explains the origins of food and thus the practice of food gathering that stems from this. The final narrative is the creation of humanity, which describes Tāne's role in creating the first woman, Hine-ahuone. From their union Hine-titama is born, whom Tāne later marries, and together they populate the Earth with their children (humankind). The nuances of mahinga kai encoded within these narratives express a Māori worldview and validate the choice of these popular narratives for analysis.

### ***The separation of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku***

The creation of Te Ao Mārama has its origins in the separation of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku. Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku were joined in a tight embrace where their offspring lived in total darkness between them for eons. One of their sons, Uepoto, was accidentally washed to the extremity of his mother through her urine.

There he saw a glimmer of light called te kitea (I. Heke, personal communication, September 17, 2014). Uepoto returned to his brothers and told them what he saw, and so the brothers began discussions to separate their parents. Tū-mata-uenga, the fiercest of the children, proposed that they kill their parents (Grey, 1956). Tāne suggested that it was better to push them apart; “one would be beneath them as a parent and the other above them as a stranger” (Reilly, 2004, p. 3). Tāne successfully pushed Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku apart, bringing into existence Te Ao Mārama (Grey, 1956; Reilly, 2004). Reilly (2004) explains: “the separation initiates a process of differentiation whereby the parents, their various sons, and their descendants, become associated with aspects of the natural world of the Māori” (p. 5). This whakapapa is depicted in Figure 1.

leaving Tū-mata-uenga to face the wild winds of Tāwhiri-mātea alone. This act of betrayal pressed Tū-mata-uenga into a rage and he sought revenge on those brothers who abandoned him. He achieved this by consuming the offspring of his brothers: fish and sea creatures from Tangaroa, birds from Tāne, kūmara from Rongo and aruhe from Haumia-tiketike (Reilly, 2004). According to Reilly (2004), the retribution Tū-mata-uenga sought against his brothers effectively subjugated them under his authority as teina; only Tāwhiri-mātea remains his adversary today, whose “anger [is] equal to that of Tū” (p. 4). Thus Tū made the food sources noa and prepared them for human consumption. He made snares from the resources of the forest to trap birds, nets to catch fish and implements to dig up kūmara and aruhe in the ground (Biggs, 1966; Grey, 1971).

**The retribution of Tū-mata-uenga**

**The creation of humanity**

The aftermath of the separation of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku is another critical narrative underpinning a Māori worldview. Tāwhiri-mātea was outraged that his brothers had separated their parents. According to Reilly (2004), “out of great love for his parents” Tāwhiri-mātea waged war on his brothers and their offspring by sending down great and devastating winds. All but Tū-mata-uenga fled from his wrath. Tangaroa fled to the sea, Tāne disappeared into the dense forest, while Rongo and Haumia-tiketike burrowed into the earth,

The third narrative examined is the creation of humanity. Several atua, including Tāne, played a part in creating the first woman from the red ochre at Kurawaka, a sacred place in Hawaiki. Tāne fashioned the first woman, Hine-ahuone (also known as Hine-hauone) and implanted both the ira atua (by virtue of his status as atua) and ira tangata; he also implanted mauri into her. Her names represent her entry into this world: Hine-ahuone means “woman shaped from ochre” and Hine-hauone represents the breath of life that was breathed into her by

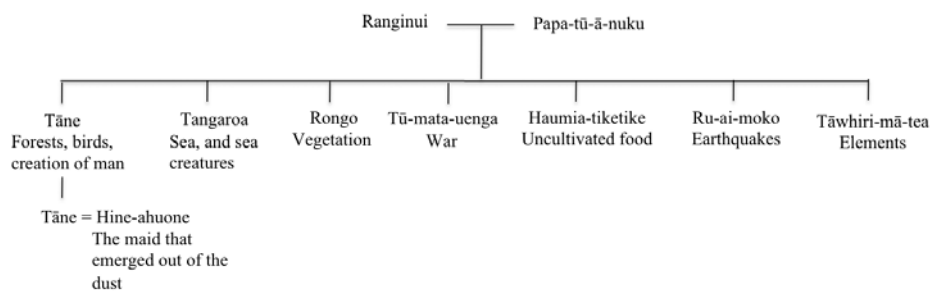


FIGURE 1 Whakapapa of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku (adapted from Jackson, 2011, p. 139).

Tāne. Tāne created the perfect being; her tinana was born from the sacred ochre of Papa-tū-ā-nuku; mauri and wairua were imbued in her and her hinengaro was imbued with knowledge when Tāne brought back the kete wānanga from the uppermost realm in the heavens and shone light into her mind (H. Hakopa, personal communication, November 3, 2014). Tāne and Hine-ahuone produced the first daughter, Hine-tītama, whom Tāne married and had children with. When Hine-tītama learned that her husband was also her father she fled in shame to Rarohenga and became Hine-nui-te-pō. This narrative explains the holistic and cyclic nature of Te Ao Māori wherein humans are born of the Earth, and the body returns back to Hine-nui-te-pō and Papa-tū-ā-nuku in death.

### Identification of discourses within creation narratives

Returning now to CDA and the concept of emergence, Fairclough (2003) explains the fundamental ways of identifying discourses within the texts. He asserts that one must “identify the main parts of the world . . . which are represented—the main themes [and] identify the particular perspective or angle or point of view from which they are represented” (p. 129). The three creation narratives were read and re-read to identify the main themes and key phrases, which were then categorised into the emergent discourses of mahinga kai. The creation narratives are underpinned by a Māori worldview and thus reflect the discourses of mahinga kai represented from a Māori perspective. The emergent discourses of mahinga kai within the three narratives were mahinga kai as whakapapa, whanaungatanga, tikanga with subsequent discourse of tapu, kaitiakitanga with subsequent discourse of mauri and mātauranga.

### *Discourse of mahinga kai as whakapapa*

The discourse of mahinga kai as whakapapa is prominent in the Māori worldview and this is reflected within the creation narratives. “Whakapapa” derives from the root word “papa” meaning foundation or base. “Whakapapa” is defined as our genealogical table, the foundation from which we emerge (Marsden, 2003a). Barlow (1991) explains that “whakapapa is the genealogical descent of all living things from the gods to the present time” (p. 173). The discourse of mahinga kai as whakapapa is concerned with the genealogical descent from which mahinga kai sites and practices are derived. The sites of mahinga kai stem from the separation of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku narrative through the emergence of the natural environment, while the practice of mahinga kai stems from the retribution of Tūmata-uenga narrative through the first account of eating food.

Mahinga kai as a discourse of whakapapa is manifest in the separation of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku and the emergence of Te Ao Mārama, which brought into existence the natural world and thus mahinga kai sites. Russell (2004) explains: “whakapapa is the backbone that permits humankind to interact with their land and landscapes” (p. 218), from which mahinga kai resources are harvested. For example, in the first narrative, the “process of differentiation whereby the parents, their various sons, and their descendants, become associated with aspects of the natural world” explains why mahinga kai sites, within both the landscape and seascape, fall under the mana of the respective atua within each domain (Reilly, 2004, p. 5). Russell (2004) adds that mahinga kai “stems from whakapapa . . . which is rooted in the land and in the place names of that land” (p. 218). Mahinga kai as whakapapa is reflected in the sites where food is gathered and these sites have whakapapa back to the atua.

Mahinga kai practices are also evident within

the retribution of Tū-mata-uenga narrative. The origin of mahinga kai is Tū-mata-uenga's consumption of the offspring of his brothers (Reilly, 2004; Walker, 1996). By consuming the offspring of his brothers, Tū-mata-uenga subjugated them under his authority as teina and effectively removed the tapu from these resources (Reilly, 2004; Walker, 1996). Patterson (1995) explains that "without this precedent, all of the children of the great gods, all of the animals and plants, would be highly tapu and therefore too dangerous to use" (p. 410). According to Reilly (2004), Tū-mata-uenga's consumption of his brothers' offspring meant that "the senior *tuākana* [became] junior ranking *tēina*" (p. 5). Tū-mata-uenga gained control over his brothers (except Tāwhiri-mātea) and humans, who are under the mana of Tū-mata-uenga, have the right as *tuākana* to continue to consume the offspring of Tū-mata-uenga's brothers (Reilly, 2004). Walker (1996) explains that "the subordination and commodification of the descendants of Tāne, Tangaroa, Rongo and Haumia-tiketike transformed them from the sacred estate of gods to the profane level of artifacts and food" (p. 17). When we eat foods from the sea and land we are expressing this whakapapa. Whakapapa is closely associated with whanaungatanga because "it is through genealogy that kinship and economic ties are cemented" (Barlow, 1991, p. 173).

### ***Discourse of mahinga kai as whanaungatanga***

The idea of whanaungatanga is embedded within the separation of the primordial parents narrative. Patterson (1994) concludes that Tāne separates his parents "in order to create an open environment in which he and his brothers can live and flourish" (p. 28). Whanaungatanga in this sense represents kin protecting each other—Tāne protecting his brothers. The acts of adorning his mother with trees and decorating the skies with whetu for his father provides another level of whanaungatanga, indicating

that "when we are forced to do harm to our kin, if there is scope for recompense and for enhancing their lives we are expected to do this" (p. 28). Whanaungatanga is about uplifting and enhancing kinship ties between people and the environment so that both may flourish (Dacker, 1990; Marsden, 2003b; Roberts, Norman, Minhinnick, Wihongi, & Kirkwood, 1995).

Whanaungatanga in relation to mahinga kai refers to the relationships and kinships that are uplifted and enhanced through food gathering—kinships between people as well as the connections between people and place (Marsden, 2003b; Patterson, 1994; Roberts et al., 1995). Dacker (1990) explores the importance of mahinga kai for whanaungatanga within a Ngāi Tahu context. He implores "tītī connected most of Kai Tahu . . . after the hopu tītī (the catching of tītī) came the kaihaukai—the exchanging of foods" (p. 14). The practice of food exchange played a major part in whanaungatanga and building relationships with one another as well as with the places they worked. Kaihaukai is described as "the cultural bonds that were expressed through the exchange of foods, at hui, tangi . . . that bound the people to each other and to the land" (Waitangi Tribunal, 1991, p. 897). Thus, the concept of whanaungatanga, which cements relationships between people, and specifically to whānau, is evident through the practice of mahinga kai.

### ***Discourse of mahinga kai as tikanga***

Tikanga is crucial for applying and understanding a Māori worldview because it represents the correct and appropriate social behaviours based on the ideas, beliefs and values inherent to Māori (Jackson, 2011; Mead, 2003). As Mead (2003) explains,

tikanga is the set of beliefs associated with practices and procedures to be followed in conducting the affairs of a group or individual. These procedures are established by

precedents through time, are held to be ritually correct, are validated by usually more than one generation and are always subject to what a group or an individual is able to do. (p. 12)

The key terms in Mead's (2003) definition are *precedents*, *practices* and *a set of beliefs* that inform adherence to correct conduct. Precedents refers to the actions of our ancestors, the knowledge accumulated over several generations and transmitted inter-generationally through oral traditions, and how these may inform our actions today (Mead, 2003). The creation narratives are an example of the precedents the atua established; creation narratives are "insights from the past [that] are utilised to solve problems of the present . . . and developing further for the next generations" (p. 21). In this sense, the three creation narratives above are imbued with tikanga through the various precedents that were established from them.

Practices are the vehicles to operate and perform tikanga (Mead, 2003). An example is the practice of mahinga kai, where tikanga is exercised through the precedents established in the creation narratives and customary concepts related to food harvesting. Customary concepts are inherent to the Māori belief system, which marks Mead's final aspect of tikanga. Tapu is an example of a customary concept inherent to mahinga kai practices and a fundamental discourse of tikanga.

Tapu emerged from the retribution of Tū-mata-uenga narrative in which Tū-mata-uenga consumes his brothers' offspring, ultimately removing the tapu and making food from these atua safe to eat (Patterson, 1994; Reilly, 2004; Shirres, 1997). This analysis is similar to Mead's (2003), who stated "the source of tapu is traceable to the primeval parents, Rangi and Papa, and their divine children, the departmental Gods" (p. 46). Tapu, an important element in all tikanga, is defined by Marsden (2003a) as sacred or set apart and refers to the restrictions placed upon objects, people or places. Mead (2003) describes the importance of tapu:

Tapu is everywhere in our world. It is present in people, in places, in buildings, in things, words and all tikanga. Tapu is inseparable from . . . our identity as Māori and from our cultural practices. (p. 30)

Tapu is inherent to the cultural practice of mahinga kai, as Dacker (1990) explains:

both the places and the working of mahika kai were controlled by tapu . . . people did not start working the resource until the tapu was removed, and when they finished, the preservation and the use of the food was controlled by tapu, too. (p. 16)

Tapu is evident throughout mahinga kai and "controlled each phase of the work" (p. 16), including the preparation, gathering, eating and sharing. This was important because it "meant that resources were used wisely, and it also prevented those without a right from working them" (p. 16). Only selected people were allowed to work certain resources of mahinga kai. Dacker explains that in Ngāi Tahu "there were many different kinds of places reserved from general use—especially from any use to do with food" (p. 21), for example, tūāhu, where rituals and ceremonies surrounding food were carried out only by tohunga. These were tapu areas, wāhi tapu, because of the association with the rituals surrounding food. Another aspect of tikanga, which is also associated with tapu, is the concept of kaitiakitanga. As noted above, tapu controlled all aspects of mahinga kai, so "that resources were used wisely" (p. 16). The next section discusses kaitiakitanga in relation to tapu and explores one way of being wise with our resources.

### ***Discourse of mahinga kai as kaitiakitanga***

Kaitiakitanga derives from three words: the prefix "kai", the root word "tiaki" and the suffix "tanga", all of which help to shape the meaning



of this term (Marsden, 2003b). “Tiaki” in its basic sense means “to guard” but also can mean “to keep, to preserve, to conserve, to foster, to protect, to shelter, to keep watch over” (p. 67). “Kai” signifies the agent of the act, so a kaitiaki is understood to be “a guardian, keeper, preserver, conservator . . . protector” (p. 67). The suffix “tanga” transforms the term to mean “guardianship, preservation, conservation, fostering, protecting [and] sheltering” (p. 67). Kaitiakitanga is another discourse of mahinga kai that is fundamental to other related discourses that emerge from the narratives. For example, kaitiakitanga is a practice that upholds tikanga such as tapu, is an inherent part of whanaungatanga for protecting human and environmental kin and is concerned with whakapapa from where the original kaitiaki derive.

The notion of guardians or spiritual kaitiaki is embedded in each of the analysed narratives. Marsden (2003b) explains that “the spiritual sons and daughters of Rangi and Papa were the *Kaitiaki* or guardians . . . Tāne was the *Kaitiaki* of the forest, Tangaroa of the sea” (p. 67). Following this, the notion of kaitiakitanga is about respecting and supporting the kaitiaki in their role of safeguarding the various domains of the atua: the sky, the land and the sea. Roberts et al. (1995) note that “this relationship between Maori and land provides the clearest, and deepest expression of what can be termed ‘environmental whanaungatanga’ or a ‘familial relationship’ with the other components of the environment” (p. 10). Kaitiakitanga thus comes to represent the protection of our human and non-human kin, analogous to the narrative that depicts Tāne protecting his brothers by separating their parents.

Kaitiakitanga as a discourse of mahinga kai is principally concerned with the preservation and protection of mahinga kai sites and practices, which was upheld through various tikanga such as rāhui. Marsden (2003b) explains that “tikanga or customs [were] instituted to protect and conserve the resources of Mother Earth”

(p. 69). For example, tapu governs the guardianship custom of rāhui that “designated the boundaries within which the tapu as a ban was imposed” (p. 69). According to Marsden (2003c), rāhui fulfilled two main functions “for the purpose of conserving or replenishing a resource . . . [and] on the occasion of death” (p. 49). To not follow this tikanga, and to ignore rāhui was dangerous physically and spiritually to Māori. On a pragmatic basis, ignoring a rāhui placed over a resource would result in the depletion of that resource. Another layer of kaitiakitanga relates to looking after the mauri that resides within the resources of the natural environment.

The discourse of mauri stems from the creation of humanity narrative in which mauri is imbued in the first woman, Hine-ahuone, by Tāne (Reilly, 2004). The concept of mauri, or life force, is essential to kaitiakitanga. Marsden (2003b) explains that “mauri created benevolent conditions within the environment both to harmonise the processes within the Earth’s ecosystem and to aid the regeneration process” (p. 70). Mauri is a fundamental principle in the Māori worldview. Marsden describes the significance of the discourse of kaitiakitanga as mauri:

*Mauri-ora* is life-force. All animate and other forms of life such as plants and trees owe their continued existence and health to mauri. When the mauri is strong, fauna and flora flourish. When it is depleted and weak those forms of life become sickly and weak. (p. 70)

This highlights the role of kaitiakitanga for protecting the mauri within the natural environment. Returning to the example of rāhui, Kawharu (2000) explains how “rahui today are implemented over a polluted or relatively unproductive resource base in order that spiritual (mauri) and physical dimensions may be revitalised” (p. 357). The use of rāhui in this context is relatable to mauri, which “acts as a metaphysical kaitiaki when humans uphold

customary management responsibilities” (p. 357).

Mauri is “the bonding element that holds the fabric of the universe together” (Marsden, 2003c, p. 44) and therefore must be sustained and protected. Our function as part of the intricate web of familial whakapapa is to actively protect mauri as kaitiaki of these taonga, which is to uphold tikanga (Roberts et al., 1995). Tikanga Māori is “firmly embedded in mātauranga Māori, which might be seen as Māori philosophy as well as Māori knowledge” (Mead, 2003, p. 7) because “tikanga comes out of the accumulated knowledge of generations of Māori” (p. 13). The following section examines the discourse of mahinga kai as mātauranga and the importance of passing this knowledge on to future generations.

### ***Discourse of mahinga kai as mātauranga***

Mātauranga emerges from all three creation narratives as these narratives share the fundamental elements of a Māori worldview and reflect Māori knowledge. According to Mead (2003), “mātauranga Māori encompasses all branches of Māori knowledge, past, present and still developing” (p. 305). Royal (1998) describes mātauranga as knowledge that is “created by Māori humans according to a set of key ideas and by the employment of certain methodologies to explain the Māori experience of the world” (p. 2). Together these definitions describe how mātauranga is accumulated over generations stretching back to the time of creation and how this knowledge explains the world from a Māori perspective. Further to this, Mead (2003) suggests that “while mātauranga might be carried in the minds, tikanga Māori puts that knowledge into practice” (p. 7). The creation narratives are embedded in mātauranga that is put into practice through tikanga and cultural practices such as mahinga kai.

The discourse of mahinga kai as mātauranga is concerned with the Māori knowledge essential

for carrying out this practice. For example, one had to be knowledgeable about the types of food available during different times of the year and the location of those resources, as well as know the landscape (Dacker, 1990; Russell, 2004). Russell (2004) argues that “one needed knowledge of what to look for as much as where it was located, in order to access mahika kai” (p. 234). She adds that “an intimate knowledge as well as wise guardianship of [resources] was essential to their ongoing use and ensured iwi survival” (p. 234). Russell’s “wise guardianship” of mahinga kai resources highlights the importance of mātauranga to kaitiakitanga. One form of protection and guardianship of mahinga kai and its underlying mātauranga is to ensure this knowledge is passed down to future generations. Kaan and Bull (2013) explain how stories about mahinga kai (similar to the narratives that depict creation) preserve the practice and culture. They describe this intimate connection:

in gathering the food, we gather the stories that gave us nourishment. Just as the conservation and preservation of our mahika kai practices are important, so too is the preservation of our stories. (p. 72)

Kaitiakitanga is more than protecting the sites and practice of mahinga kai, it is about protecting the mātauranga that is imbued within the practice. Mahinga kai as a discourse of mātauranga “assists in the transfer of knowledge and continuation of [Māori] cultural practices . . . a way for us to learn about and connect with our whenua, awa, roto and moana” (Kaan & Bull, 2013, p. 72).

### **Conclusion**

The multiple interpretations of mahinga kai emerge from Māori creation narratives and express a Māori worldview. Campbell (2004) reminds us of the fundamental properties of

myth that shape and enrich our lives. This paper has surveyed three of Campbell’s four functions of mythology. Regarding the first, one must “reconcile consciousness to the preconditions of its own existence” (p. 1), and this paper has traced the origin of mahinga kai back to the beginning of creation itself. In order to understand mahinga kai (reconcile consciousness) we must first understand how it came to be (preconditions of its own existence); thus an analysis of the creation narratives was necessary. The second function of mythology is to “present an image of the cosmos” (p. 9), and the discursive analysis of mahinga kai within creation narratives provided here present a clear image of our understanding of the universe: a Māori worldview. Finally, the third function of mythology is “to validate and maintain a certain sociological system”, which relates to the practice of mahinga kai and its associated discourses. The emergent discourses of mahinga kai as whakapapa, whanaungatanga, tikanga (with subsequent discourse of tapu), kaitiakitanga (with subsequent discourse of mauri) and mātauranga illustrate the interconnected systems of mahinga kai that form our concept of reality. Each ritual, concept and belief associated with mahinga kai is based on that entire system of a Māori worldview.

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### Glossary

Aotearoa	Māori name for New Zealand; literally “land of the long white cloud”
aroha	love, affection
aruhe	fern root
atua	gods, deity
awa	river
hapū	sub-tribe
Haumia-tiketike	god of cultivated food
Hawaiki	the traditional Māori place of origin
Hine-ahuone/ Hine-hauone	first woman
hinengaro	mind, mental element
Hine-nui-te-pō	goddess of death
Hine-tītama	first daughter, dawn maiden
hopu tītī	catching of tītī, harvesting tītī
hui	meeting, gathering
ira atua	spiritual or godly aspect
ira tangata	human aspect
iwi	tribe
kai	food, to eat
kaihaukai	cultural bonds expressed through the exchange of foods
kaitiaki	guardian, protector, spiritual animal
kaitiakitanga	guardianship, protection, resource management
Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki	South Island sub-tribe
kaupapa	purpose, goal, agenda
kete wānanga	the baskets of knowledge
kūmara	sweet potato
Kurawaka	sacred place in Hawaiki
mahinga kai/ mahika kai	food gathering practice, where food is produced and procured
mana	power, authority
mātauranga	knowledge, Māori knowledge
mauri	life force, life essence

moana	ocean, sea
Ngāi Tahu/Kāi Tahu	South Island tribe
noa	ordinary
Papa-tū-ā-nuku	Earth Mother
rāhui	temporary closure, restriction
rangatiratanga	self-determination, chieftainship
Ranginui/Raki	Sky Father
Rarohenga	the Underworld, realm of the spirits
Rongo	god of uncultivated food
roto	lake
taiāpure	Māori fisheries management
Tāne-mahuta/Tāne	god of forests, birds, trees
Tangaroa/Takaroa	god of the sea
tangi/tangihanga	funeral
tapu	sacred, set apart, restricted
Tāwhiri-mātea	god of the winds and elements
Te Ao Māori	the Māori worldview
Te Ao Mārama	the world of day, light
teina	younger sibling, of junior rank
te kitea	the first vision
tikanga	custom
tinana	body
tītī	mutton bird
tohunga	skilled person, chosen expert, priest
tūāhu	altar
tuakana	older sibling, of senior rank
Tū-mata-uenga	god of war
Uepoto	youngest son of Ranginui and Papa-tū-ā-nuku
wāhi tapu	restricted places
wairua	spirit, spiritual
whakapapa	genealogy, connections, origins
whānau	family
whanaungatanga	relationships, connections, networking
whenua	land, placenta
whetu	stars

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