

There was, fortunately, a beneficent atua who could be summoned from the blue deeps of rolling Raukawa if a canoe were in danger of being lost. This sea-god was Pane-iraira ("Speckled Head"), from very ancient times a traditional taniwha or marine deity of the descendants of the Polynesian adventurers who came to New Zealand from the South Sea Islands in the "Tainui" canoe. Pane-iraira is described as a great whale-like fish with a hollow on his back. He is the guardian of the high chiefs of Tainui stock when they travel by sea. Says Hare Pore, an old whaleboat sailor, chief of the Ngati-ranrus Tribe Wairau:—

"If our canoes were in danger when crossing the Sea of Raukawa in former times, particularly when nearing the coast of Arapawa or passing Nga-whatu, through a gale of wind coming on suddenly, or a high sea rising, those on board her would repeat invocations to Pane-iraira, the taniwha, to come to their aid. If there were a tohunga or priest on board he would recite a karakia to Pane-iraira, who lived in these waters. And if the tohunga were a man of mana and he recited the charm correctly, then the sea-god would appear and save the canoe. He would swim along by the side of the waka, and his sacred mana would smooth the seas and make safe the ocean way for the crew who trusted in their ancestral taniwha."

The mana of a Maori taniwha was evidently as potent as oil upon troubled waters.

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The following song, well known to the old Maoris on both sides of Cook Strait, contains an allusion to the custom of blindfolding strangers on their first voyage of Raukawa past The Brothers. It is a pao or love song composed about sixty years ago by a young woman named Tuhupu, of the Ngati-Awa tribe, who lived on the coast of the North Island not far from Wellington Harbour, for her lover who sailed away across the strait in the war canoe of the chief Heteraka Patutahi, uncle of Hare Rore:—