

The

POLYNESIAN TATTOO Handbook

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CREATING MEANINGFUL POLYNESIAN TATTOOS

spear heads motif

the warrior, courage
valiance, fighting for
your beliefs

shark teeth motif

protection on water,
strength, adaptability



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Handbook

TattooTribes.com

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1

FOREWORD

5



“Mate atu he tetekura, ara mai he tetekura”

—When a fern frond dies, another will take its place:

Life continues in our children.

Polynesia is a subregion of Oceania, comprising of a large grouping of over 1,000 islands scattered over the central and southern Pacific Ocean, within a triangle that has New Zealand, Hawaii and Easter Island as its corners. The people who inhabit the islands of Polynesia are termed Polynesians and they share many similar traits including language, culture and beliefs.

Polynesian languages may actually vary slightly from each other, or even a great deal, depending on the distance between the groups of islands and the frequency of their contacts. There are some words which are basically the same throughout all Polynesian languages, reflecting the deepest core of all Polynesian cultures.

Two emblematic ones are *moana* (ocean) and *mana* (spiritual force, energy).

It's interesting to note how similar these two words are and this should not be a surprise once we understand the relation between Polynesian cultures and the ocean.

The ocean guarantees life.



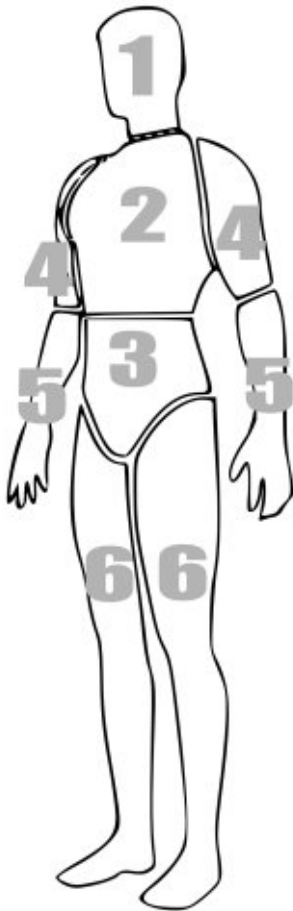


2

PLACEMENT ON THE BODY

13

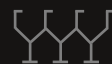
Let's see the body in detail:



1. Head

It's our contact to Rangi and as such it is related to **spirituality**, **knowledge**, **wisdom** and **intuition**.





spear heads motif

shark teeth motif

Second simplification:



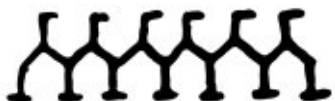
a



b



c



d (*ani ata*)

Overstylized *enata* joined together in a row of people holding hands form the motif called *ani ata*, which translates to "cloudy sky":

Rangi (Heaven) and Papa (Earth) once laid closely embracing each other and their children lived between them in darkness until deified men forced them apart by pushing Rangi up to let the light in. This concept of a row related to the sky is present throughout all Polynesian languages and a row of *enata* in a semicircle is commonly used to represent the sky as well as the ancestors guarding upon their descendants:



a





4

QUICK REFERENCE

69

PROTECTION

PROTECTION

STRENGTH

ADAPTABILITY

SUCCESS

JOY

PROSPERITY

DIFFICULTIES

FRIENDSHIP



adaptability: octopus, shark

adventure: canoe

adversities: eels

affection: sea shell

alertness: seagulls

ancestors: ipu, aumakua, cord

awakening: koru

B

balance: Marquesan cross, manaia, tiki

be prepared: adze, fish hook

beauty: hibiscus, manta, tiare flowers

beyond: waves

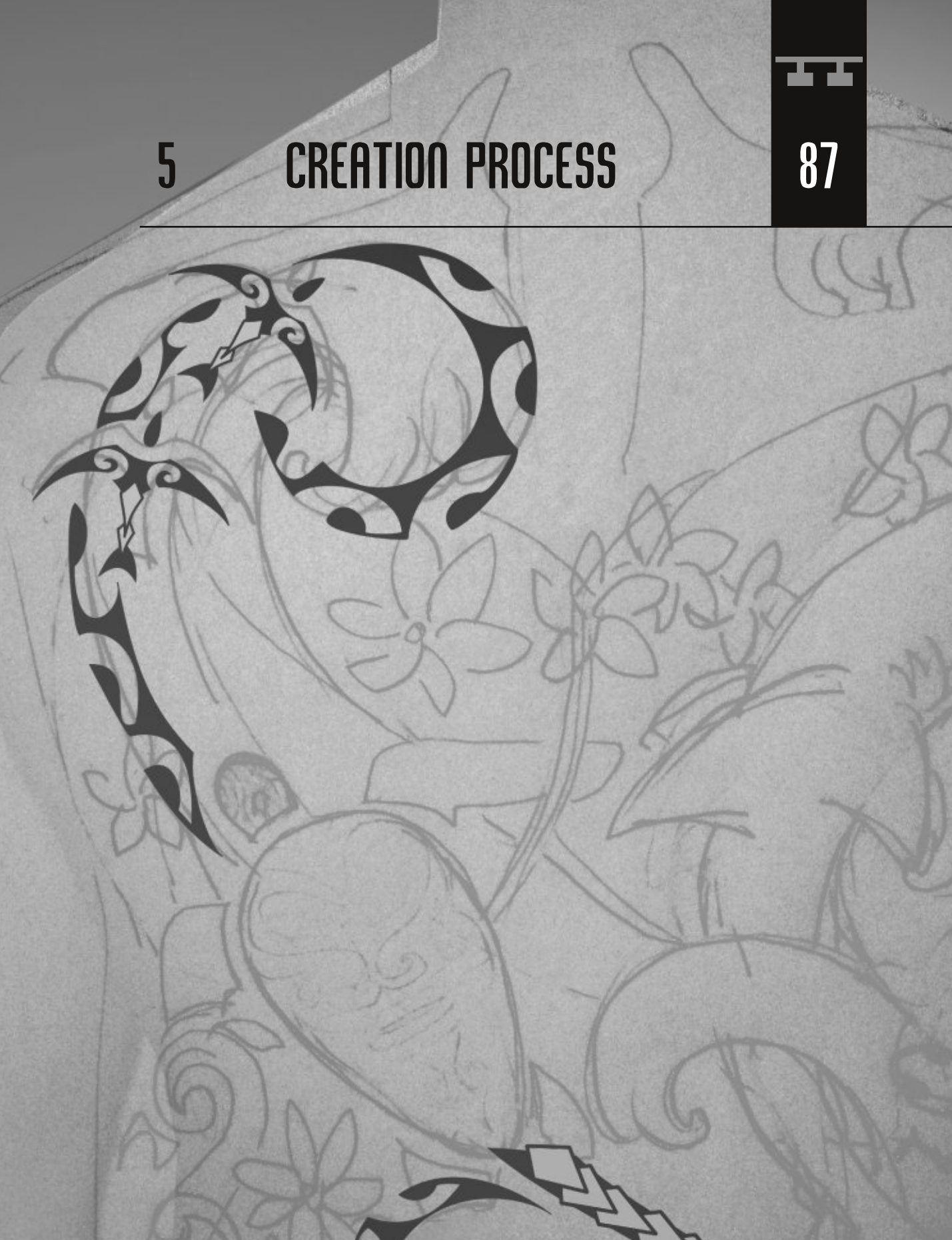
birth: koru, ipu

blessing: ti leaves, kava

boldness: spear heads

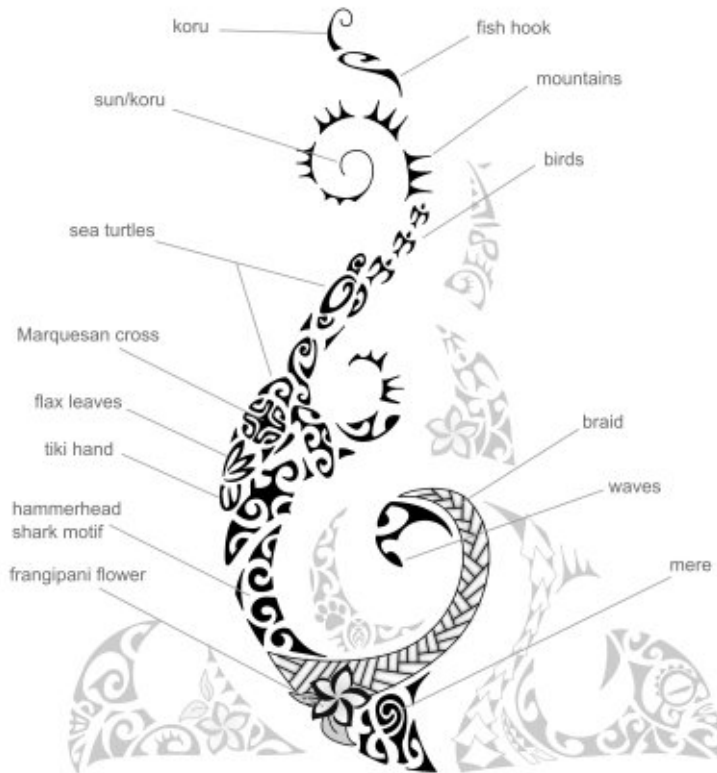
bonds: braid, ani ata, twist (eternal love), dolphin





shaped like a *koru* to represent a new beginning. The top elements are a fish hook (prosperity) and another stylized *koru*.

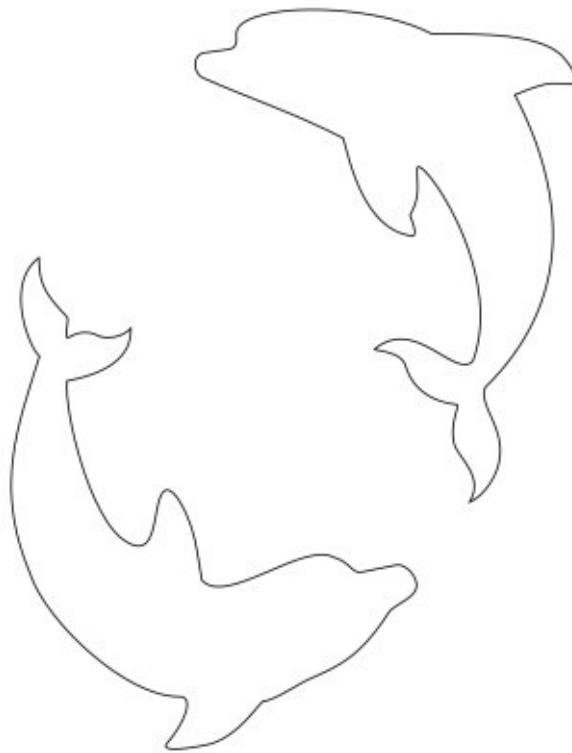
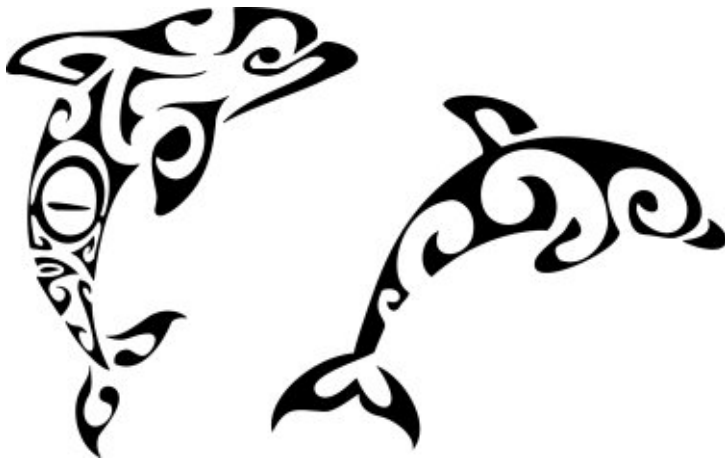
At the base, close to the right flame representing her grandfather, a mere (a short club held by chiefs) represents the respect she has for him.



Next page, the big flame on the right shaped like a fish hook (prosperity, status) represents her grandfather Sati Nath (a maorigram of the letters SN appears inside of it). He was the protector of the family (the *tiki* facing outwards).



Dolphins



Latin alphabet

A:



variant

B:



C:

