

By: Sachin 2008, Science Editor

## [The Sacred Sharks](#)

### *When sharks turn into gods*

Sharks are amongst the least understood creatures. A complex mythology depicting the shark as a mystical animal emerged in many cultures. Polynesian myths and legends talk about Kauhuhu, the shark god, which lives in a deep submarine cave or palace that cannot be seen by anybody. Up to 11 shark-gods are found in the Hawaiian mythology. Kamohoali'i was the most worshiped of the shark gods, being the older and favored brother of Pele, the goddess of fire, lightning, dance, volcanoes and violence. The god could transform in human or fish. The Australian Aborigines talk about Bangudja, the tiger-shark, which attacked the dolphin man in the Gulf of Carpentaria, leaving behind a large red spot on the rocks of Chasm Island, which can be seen even today. The Indigenous people of Solomon believe that the bodies of the sharks are inhabited by the souls of the dead people. Dakuwanga was a shark god who was the eater of lost souls. The Indians of the northwest North America often presented images of the dogfish sharks on their totem posts, in the memory of a woman kidnapped by a shark, turned herself into a shark. Except for the people of the Pacific islands, no other civilization transformed the shark into a symbol or a divine being. European legends or stories do not even mention it. The fables of Aesop do not mention the shark, but in ancient Greece, it was forbidden to eat shark flesh at women's festivals. Sharks are rather present in books of natural history or board journals of the sailors. Sharks have entered in our collective conscience relatively recently. In a book published in Rome in 1535, "Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus", wrote by Olaus Magnus, a first drawing showing a man attacked by a shark is presented.