



3. HAIRINI MARAE

# TE WHAKAPAUKARAKIA



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Tamahika was a descendent of Ngāruanui of Te Arawa. He married Ngaruinga of Ngāti Ranginui. They had four sons and two daughters: Te Kiriwera, Rauika, Te Waunga, Ngarongo, Tahora, and Kahumouku. All Ngāi Te Ahi families descend from these six ancestors.

When Ngaruinga grew older she said to Tamahika, “Take me home to visit my people in Tauranga.” Tamahika agreed and with his two eldest sons and warriors for company, the group prepared themselves for the journey. When Korokaha the younger brother of Tamahika heard of his plans, he said, “Go as food for Ngāi Te Rangī, you have opened the way and I will follow.”

The group took the trail through the Mangorewa Gorge until they reached Whakapaukarakia in Oropi, and camped for the night. Here, Tamahika’s brother-in-law Tāriki said: “Tama, return to Rotorua or you will be killed.” Tamahika replied, “Does it matter! There are many stars in the skies, Whakaue is on the land.”

When Tākiri heard that, he misinterpreted the response. Tamahika knew he had many descendants to take his place in the event of death. Tākiri then raised a war party, while Tamahika and his band hastily put some defences together.

In the battle, it soon became obvious that Tamahika and his party would soon be overwhelmed; Tākiri called out, “Tama let all the women and female children go, but all the men and male children must fight.” Tamahika told Ngaruinga that she must flee with the children and they devised a plan; the genitals of the male children were tied between their legs to deceive the other party. Tamahika then sent them out with the women and their sisters, and under the cover of smoke they all fled to safety.

Looking back at the burning defences Ngaruinga cried out, “E Hi come, let the men carry the battle.” With his voice unwavering and confident, Tamahika chose an honourable death. Ngaruinga and her family then settled in Tauranga, and in memory of the Battle of Whakapaukarakia, the tribe became known as Ngāi Te Ahi.

(He kōrero i kohia e Huikakahu Kawe)

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