9. Tūtereinga MARAE

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Pirirākau is the senior hapū of the Ngāti Ranginui Iwi. All the Ngāti Ranginui hapū can claim descent from the ancestor Tūtereinga.

The origins of the Pirirākau hapū begin with the arrival of the waka Tākitimu and descend from Ranginui (1) - the eponymous ancestor of the Ngāti Ranginui iwi, down to Tūtereinga then Rangiwhakakaha, who lived at Oikimoke pā.

The hapū boundaries extend from the mouth of the Wairoa river, inland to the Kaimai ridge, and down the Poupou stream to the Aongatete river. Pirirākau have lived and maintained a presence in this area for many generations.

While kaumātua didn't like rangatahi going to Tahataharoa, it was part of a large playground frequented by many of Tūtereinga's descendants. It was also a place where traditional methods of fishing and harvesting were taught, and where we learnt about the history and legacy left to us by Tūtereinga.

The oral traditions about Tūtereinga and his connection to Tahataharoa and Te Tawa have been passed down to his descendants as a record of our origins. Due to the legacy left to us by Tūtereinga, Tahataharoa is one of the most sacred sites in the Pirirākau rohe.

When Tūtereinga approached the sunset of his life, his people asked him if he would like to lie on the summit of Mauao with his forebears; Tūtereinga replied:

'Kao. Tanumia ahau i Tahataharoa kia rongo ai ahau i te tangi o te tai.'

'Bury me at Tahataharoa so that I might hear the murmur of the sea.'

Thus, Tūtereinga chose to be buried at Tahataharoa, adjacent to his father's pā of Pukewhanake, in sight of Oikimoke, and facing Mauao - the principal cultural icon in Tauranga Moana. His interment gave manawhenua to the hapū. Tūtereinga's final wish placed an inherent obligation and duty on his descendants to protect the mauri that originated with his ohaaki and subsequent burial.

As befits a man of his rank, the actual site of Tūtereinga's grave was kept secret. To Pirirākau, the whole of the landscape is waahi tapu. It has been stressed by our kaumatua that the desecration of his remains equates to the desecration of the mauri. The ohaaki of Tūtereinga, and the burial rituals enacted at the time created an inextricable link between his descendants and the whenua. If his remains are distrubed or removed, we - his uri - are lost.