

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand. Episode 83: Ka Rite. This podcast is supported by our amazing Patrons. If you want to support HANZ go to patreon.com/historyaotearoa. Last time, we talked about what haka was and some of the misconceptions around it. Today we will talk more about haka, such as the training, social importance and haka in the 21st century. To start though, lets talk about what Europeans thought about haka when they first encountered it, cause of course they had an opinion.

Dutchman Abel Tasman was the first European to encounter the haka. What's interesting about this is that he never actually set foot on the land part of Land of the Long White Cloud, though we know he was chased by some waka who were probably performing a haka. As such, Tasman never stuck around to find out what was actually going on so didn't really record much about it. So while Tasman was likely technically the first European to encounter haka, Cook is actually the first person who gave us any useful insight into what he saw. Cook's initial encounter with a haka came when he was approached by a group upon landing near modern Gisborne. The men approached in what the Europeans took to be a hostile manner but it is now thought that the Māori were doing a wero or something similar to try and figure out the intentions of the newcomers. This would have involved one or a few of the group approaching the Europeans, wide eyes, tongues out, brandishing their weapons, speaking to them in Te Reo which the Europeans couldn't understand along with jumping around, posing and swinging their weapons to show off how good a fighters they are and that they are not to be fucked with if the European intention was hostile. To other Māori, this would have been well understood as a wero, a challenge and as long as the manuhiri showed proper peaceful etiquette, there would be no need for confrontation. However, it's easy to see how someone not familiar with this practice could take it to be an immediate indication of hostility, so Cook's crew did the thing they thought was right. They fired their muskets as a warning before firing on the men themselves, killing at least one. This prompted the Māori group to form ranks "each man jump'd with a swinging motion at the same instant of time to the right and left alternately accomodating a war song in very just time to each mition; their lances were at the same time elevated a considerable height above their heads". Although this was the first time Europeans recorded, at least in detail, an encounter with the haka, it wouldn't be the last for Cook's crew. The *Endeavour's* surgeon would later recount how seven waka approached her full of soldiers who began beating their paddles, raising their weapons and chanting in haka when a cannon was fired across their bow. Banks describes how their contorted faces, poked out tongues and body movements gave a fercious and threatening visage. Sidney Parkinson captures a few of these encounters in his sketches, showing the various postures but he does seem to be quite liberal with how many characters are dressed like chiefs, as there likely wouldn't be more than a couple on each waka.

Training for haka wasn't just limited to learning the movements, timing etc. A large amount of teaching was dedicated just to the face, in partiucalar the pūkana. Something that I learnt while researching this is that pūkana doesn't refer to the whole expression of the widening of the eyes and the protuding tongue. In fact, it only refers to when the eyes are widened, dilated or rolled back, whētero is the term used to mean the sticking out of the tongue that is also common in haka. One such training exercise for this involved looking down and to the side at a tin can, which was progressively moved closer to the person's feet to get their eyes into the correct position for a pūkana. The reason the eyes and tongue are are important to the haka is cause eyes are considered to be where the soul lives/where to access or see the soul whereas the tongue is how thoughts pass from mind to other people via speech. It is also thought among Tūhoe that the tongue represents the penis, the penis being a visible appendage that indicates masulinity so to stick the tongue out is to symbolise and profess one's masculinity. As such, some deride the use of the tongue in modern haka where it is protruded "in a lizard like way [that] does not pay the tongue its just obeisance as is

the case when the tongue is fully extended.” More modern interpretations of whētero describe it as being a symbol of defiance but again, there are those that disagree that this is how it is used.

As we mentioned before, haka was used a lot when two groups met each other, even if the cause for the meeting was meant to be totally peaceful. According to Best, this followed a pretty strict protocol and a kinda ceremonial or ritualistic challenge and response would be done. Much like Cook’s first encounter, this interaction could be easily seen as hostile intent to someone who was unfamiliar with what was going on. This wasn’t meant to show hostile intent, mostly they were trying to indicate that should the other party decide to engage in any funny business, they were ready to fight and hey, look at how strong we all are and, how nimble, how well we wield our weapons, we could definitely take you in a fight! You know, that sorta thing. This apparently wasn’t an unfounded concern as it wasn’t uncommon for groups to take advantage of the tangata whenua’s guard being down. So, when two groups met on a marae, tangata whenua, remember that’s the group of people that are the ‘home’ side, would kneel down on one knee, holding their weapons in both hands. The manuhiri, the guests, would slowly advance with the rangatira and their best fighters at the front of the group, ready for trouble should it occur but also to show off their best and most capable fighters. Once the manuhiri got within throwing distance, someone from the kneeling tangata whenua would emerge as the rest of the group remained silent. This person was usually selected for their intimidating stature and they would advance towards the approaching manuhiri before throwing a mānuka spear at them, aiming it to land in front of the group. Once done, the spear thrower would retreat back into the silent, kneeling ranks with a second person now coming out to do the same thing. Both times the advancing manuhiri would ignore this and keep moving forward slowly. A third person would break ranks from the kneeling group, this time selected for how quick on their feet they were. This person would do a bit more gesticulating at the manuhiri before throwing their mānuka spear, which they would do when the guests were about 30m from them. Once the spear was released from their grip, they would sprint as fast as they could back to their fellow tangata whenua. The manuhiri would send out their own sprinter at the same time to chase them down. If the runner is caught, then the manuhiri champion is allowed to strike the runner down or otherwise bring them to the ground. Alternately, the runner can turn to face the manuhiri champion and try to engage them in close combat or trip them up. Should the runner make it back to their side, the one pursuing them will kneel in front of the kneeling ranks as the rest of the manuhiri break into a trot to catch up, often making low sounds from their throats.

Upon reaching the kneeling manuhiri, they stop and the tangata whenua leaders call upon their group to rise and move around to the right side of the manuhiri, trotting around them until they reach the spot where the third mānuka spear landed. They then move back to where they started, closely passing the manuhiri twice who would always turn to ensure that they are facing each other. Best describes this scene in quite an emotive way, “In the same parallel manner, quivering with excitement, and half suppressed energy of voice and muscle, the stamping of hundreds of bare feet upon the earth drones upon the ear” This was a tense exchange, the two sides were assessing the other, waiting to see if someone would make a move but probably hoping they wouldn’t. It would only take one guy to pop off for all hell to break loose, one move, one strike, one person who couldn’t keep themselves restrained, I’m sure you could feel the tension in the air. The tangata whenua would stop once they reached their initial spot, kneel again and would pause, waiting in silence until their leader called for the group to rise again. They all do so in unison and begin their haka peruperu with as much noise and intensity as they can muster. The manuhiri would respond in kind. After all this there would be some whaikorero and each group would hongī. This would end the formal encounter with the tangata whenua usually inviting the manuhiri in for some kai.

What's interesting about all this is that although what Best describes doesn't fit what we might think as a pōwhiri we do actually see elements of it in modern pōwhiri, such as manuhiri gathering at the entrance of a marae where they will be welcomed by a karanga and wero, substituting the spear for another small item that is placed in front of them, rather than thrown. The manuhiri may then respond with their own karanga and even haka can be used depending on the occasion and the guests present. There are also the speeches, hongis, food and most of the other stuff we see in Best's explanation, so it's possible the encounter he describes may have been the precursor to modern pōwhiri or at least had an influence on it.

In terms of its social importance, Te Hamana Mahuika, an expert on haka of Ngāti Porou said "the haka, however, was not merely a pastime, but it was also a custom of high social importance in the welcoming and entertainment of visitors. Tribal reputation rose or fell on their ability to perform the haka. The leader had to be an expert, who, by the timing of voice and movement, influenced the performance of his team." As this quote shows and as we have mentioned, haka had a much wider social use than just war. It wasn't exactly a game as such but rather it was seen in a similar vein as dancing with both men and women performing, though their roles were somewhat different. Same with dancing today, haka was a popular pastime in the evening to watch with family as well as at large, important gatherings. When performed in a more casual setting, in the evenings in front of family for example, slower songs and actions would be used with painted faces and flowers in their hair. So it was rather more subdued than the more aggressive haka peruperu. There were also haka for children which were naturally more simple than those for adults, being in the same realm as nursery rhymes for Western children. In the case of more formal settings, the performers would be decked out in their best clothes and accessories, with some younger folk wearing paint if they didn't have much moko on their face, something that is still done with kapa haka today. Although haka could be performed just as pure entertainment it could be used in other contexts with many other meanings, usually as a significant acknowledgement of some kind such as a large haul of fish being caught or during peace negotiations. When haka were performed to insult or belittle a person or party, usually in response to some sort of offence, the performers were sometimes naked to add impact to their words or they could even bend over and expose themselves! Best talks about how when govt officials came to assess Tuhoe land and who owned it, many haka were directed towards them, nearly all of them meant to deride and dishonour them. One such instance had the men walk into the marae with nothing on their lower half and perform a haka which compared the officials to frogs.

We have talked a lot about the men's role in haka but what about the women's? Well, a Ngāti Porou expert lays out a couple of guidelines as to how it works. Men are all about the aggression in the haka, provoking the other side and being very animated in their movements especially in terms of the whētero, the poking out of the tongue. Women on the other hand were only really allowed to move their hips and hands and most of the expression was in the eyes, particularly when doing the pūkana. This may seem fairly limiting but if you think that you probably haven't seen how expressive women can be in the haka. As always though, these gender roles weren't hard and fast. The women who were the best at pūkana sometimes performed on the side of the men, rather than behind which is where women would often be. In some cases these women were armed and acted to protect the flanks of the performers. It was also recorded that women would lead the haka on occasion, which Europeans were very not keen on and were quite vicious in their condemnation of it. Best, of course, thought that women's involvement was a sex thing, particularly in how they moved, which isn't really true.

Most haka today are haka taparahi, haka without weapons, mostly because kapa haka has overtaken haka peruperu as the most important and widespread form. Kapa haka is more about the art form of the haka and is done in competitions in all sorts of contexts. Likely one of the first modern cultural competitions involving haka occurred in the royal visit of 1901. A huge gathering of Māori, possibly 10% of the entire population at the time came to welcome the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, better known by their later title, King George V and Queen Consort Mary of Teck. This was a fairly significant event, not just in the obvious sense that Queen Victoria had only recently died and George was next in line to lead the Empire, but in the sense that many of the Māori gathered had fought in the New Zealand Wars on the side of the Crown and very much held a connotation between haka and warfare. Kinda wrapped up in this was that the hosts, Te Arawa, weren't too keen on the fact that the northern iwi Ngāpuhi had been invited, as about 80 years earlier they had made a rather devastating raid against Te Arawa. However, since the iwi elders gave strict instructions not to betray the mana of the tribe, they could only settle their differences on the dancefloor, as it were. The iwi of the east coast, that of Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Kahunhunu were seen as among the best at haka and the ones to beat. The competition was to be held at Rotorua and for two weeks before the royals arrived, they practiced and rehearsed, scouting out each others moves. Everyone was keen to make an impression not just on the royals, but each other. It was an unusual time of unity when Māori had been very much fractured in the last century.

In more recent times, haka hasn't been used in modern military engagements as an actual intimidation tactic towards the enemy. The enemy soldiers can just mow you down with their guns as you stand up and make yourself obvious, so instead it has been reserved for performing to important people such as visiting ministers, Prime ministers and other world leaders, military leaders and that sort of thing. Haka has also become a key part of the modern New Zealand army, particularly since the the army incorporated a fair amount of Māori tikanga in the form of adopting the name Ngāti Tūmataunga, the tribe of the god of war. This also was in part to formalise the relationship between Māori and non-Māori in service to the colonial government, something that has been occurring as early as 1845. In 1997, a haka was commissioned to be composed specifically for the army, cause they found that the haka they had been using had elements of a haka called Rūaumoko which was pretty important to those of the east coast of the North Island. Especially since it was considered pretty bad if this haka was performed incorrectly or badly. Additionally it was considered poor form for elements of a haka named after the god of earthquakes and volcanoes to be used in a haka dedicated to the god of war. The whole story is actually really interesting and a bit too out of scope for this episode but we will cover it in more detail in a later one.

Next time, we will tell origin story of the world's most famous haka. Although Ka Mate is most well known for being performed by the All Blacks, its origin is actually way back in the Musket Wars of the early 19th century with the near capture of one of Māoridom's best military generals, Ngāti Toa rangatira Te Rauparaha.

If you want to send me feedback, ask a question, suggest a topic or just have a chinwag you can find my email and social media on historyaotearoa.com. You can also find helpful resources there like transcripts, sources and translations for some of the Te Reo Māori we have used. You can help support HANZ through Patreon, buying merch or giving us a review, it means a lot and helps spread the story of Aotearoa New Zealand. As always, haere tū atu, hoki tū mai. See you next time!