

## All Blacks Haka Explained & Translated

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### The Haka All Black - In the Beginning

Some authorities record the first use of the haka by the New Zealand team as occurring in Britain in 1905/6. Sydney based Kiwi journalist Spiro Zavos however claims the very first New Zealand team, in New South Wales in 1884 "used a Maori war cry to introduce itself to its opponents before each of its matches".

A Sydney newspaper reported: "The sound given in good time and union by 18 pairs of powerful lungs was sometimes tremendous. The NSW men declared it was hardly fair of the visitors to lighten them out of their wits before the game began". Zavos also claims that the 1903 New Zealand team in Australia (the first to play an official test match) used a mocking haka Tena koe, Kangaroo! Tupoto koe, Kanagaroo! (How do you do, Kangaroo! You look out, Kangaroo!), a rather unkind reflection on the early superiority New Zealand achieved against Australia.

It was however the 1905/6 All Blacks in Britain who really popularised the haka. Whether they performed it before every match is uncertain, but it was done before the first of the five test matches, against Scotland on 18 November.

Though neither of the team's two Maoris, Billy Stead or Bill Cunningham, played the haka was still performed before the Welsh test, The Lyttelton Times reported "The war cry went well, and the crowd listened and watched in pleased silence, and thundered their approval at its close. But for dramatic effect it was far surpassed by what followed. The Welsh team, led by Teddy Morgan, started, in Welsh, their national anthem, 'Hen Mad fy Nhadau' (Land of my Fathers). Their singing was somewhat weak in volume, and it was some seconds before the eager crowd could hear its melody. Then suddenly forty thousand Welsh voices caught up the noble strain, and from every corner of the ground rose the deep, swelling, heart-stirring chorus... The effect was intensely thrilling, even awe inspiring... the All Blacks could not be blamed for feeling that they were a few against many... \*



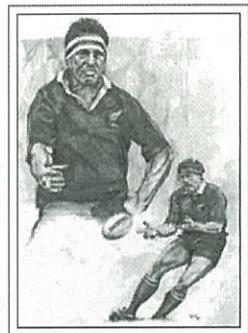
1905 'Originals' very loose haka

The Wales Test 1905. The Nag's Head Press. 1983.

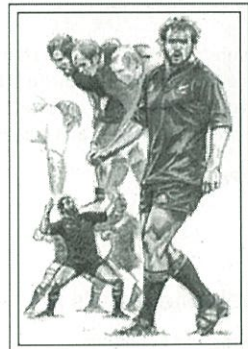
The South Wales Echo report of the match includes the words of the haka and a translation supplied by team members, making it clear that it was the Te Rauparaha haka that was performed.

The "Originals" Were not however the first rugby team to perform the haka in Britain. That distinction goes to the "Native" team on 3 October 1888 before their tour opener against Surrey. The privately organised "Natives" tour had to pay its way and the pre match haka was no doubt seen as a means of attracting the public. The original intention was that the haka would precede each match and that mats and other traditional costume would be used. The mats were soon discarded and the initial reaction to the haka was rather unfavourable. The war cry they are described as using, "Ake Ake Kia Kaha", suggest it was not the Te Rauparaha haka they performed.

Click Here To View An  Windows Media Player  
All Black Haka - 1922 (950kb)  
Thanks to Screensound Australia for use of their footage



Wayne Shelford  
All Black 1986 - 1990



Carl Hayman  
All Black 2001-2007



1924/25 All Blacks perform haka

I can find no reference to the next All Black team, to Australia in 1907, doing the haka but the 1910 side did, before matches and also at a reception for the American Universities team. Popular demand forced a repeat performance, before the Americans responded with their war cries "which were quite different from anything heard in the Antipodes".

The next touring side, to America in 1913, held daily haka practices on board ship. The team was given a big welcome on arrival in San Francisco and before disembarking the All Blacks gave their haka, which had the crowd yelling their approval"

In Australia in 1914 the Brisbane Courier allowed itself some license in describing the haka that preceded the match against Queensland "The visitors, after lining up in front of the grandstand, gave a new Maori war-cry, H Murray acting as the chief wild animal, uttering in dead Maori tongue strange piercing sounds punctuated with wild beating of hands and stampede of hoofs. The others barked a response in similarity and ended up with something that sounded like three cheers. This is what the Maoris used to do in the good old days when they met any stray person wandering over the chiefs sacred territory without a licence. It was grace before supper. There was a parable behind the whole thing and that was that Queensland were going to be gobbled down whole."

It seems that by the time of the first World War the haka was established as part of top New Zealand rugby. The programme for a match between New Zealand Army and Wales on Boxing Day 1916 included the words of "THE NEW ZEALAND WAR CRY". They are the words of the Te Rauparaha haka but are described rather loosely as "the war cry of a famous Maori tribe, and is a challenge to the other fellow to 'come outside.'"

Harry Jacob, Horowhenua's first All Black, led the haka for the 1920 team in Australia and George Nepia, later to become the first East Coast All Black, did so for the 1924/5 "Invincibles" in Britain. The latter side had their own haka, written for

them during the voyage to England by two supporters, Judge Acheson of the the Native Land Court and Wiremu Rangi of Gisborne. More complicated than the Te Rauparaha haka, it was performed before all but two of the tour matches, with the Press criticising the team for disappointing spectators on those two occasions.

There was some misunderstanding about the haka in Britain at this time. In his tour book lock Read Masters reported "The day of our arrival in England the following translation appeared in big type in some of the newspapers: 'Now we are in England feed us, feed us! Or we will tear you! tear you! tear you!!!' Although some girls in London treated the matter as a joke, and sent several of us packets of biscuits, stating that they were quite prepared to feed us, as long as we did not tear them to pieces! There is not the slightest doubt that this misinterpretation had the effect of prejudicing some people against our Haka, which was resented in some quarters."



The 1932 All Blacks perform, rather uncertainly, a wharfside haka

New Zealand Maori teams had been fielded since 1910 and the 1926/7 New Zealand Maori team, on its long and very successful tour to France, England, Wales and Canada further popularised the haka.

That the haka had become a feature of New Zealand sport was evidenced during the disastrous (seven players were sent home) New Zealand Rugby League tour of England, also in 1926/7. One of the many points of dissension arose en route to England "The manager (an Australian) next affronted the players when they were crossing Canada by train and he demanded that they perform the Maori haka several times each day."



The 1967 All Blacks face the Queen and other dignitaries for their haka before the test against England

The 1928 team in South Africa of course did not include Maoris but the haka was performed before seven of the 23 matches, including three of the tests "and as usual was well received". Hawkes Bay wing Bert Grenside was one who led the haka in those seven performances.

Despite the booklet previewing their tour providing a translation one team that did not do a pre-match haka was the 1935/6 All Blacks in Britain, though they did do some practice on the voyage to England and some impromptu performances at social functions.

Generally the haka had only been performed by New Zealand teams playing away from home (there were some exceptions eg the 3rd test against South Africa 1921) but in 1975 when Scotland toured, during the World Cup in 1987 and since the haka has been seen here too. Buck Shelford led it in the late eighties, something he acknowledged he loved doing, and took it to a new level of efficiency. To quote Zinzan Brooke "Buck was the greatest haka-leader of them all. He meant every word of it and he made every word and gesture stick by the way he played the game."

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