

## A Dying Culture?

*Kia Ora!* Today I want to share with you a little bit about my country, Aotearoa, and its history. Particularly, I want to tell you about the Māori people, the indigenous people of our country, and Māori culture, which has recently come to be embraced by most people in our nation. Our small island country is at the edge of the world, and one of the first peoples to arrive here were the Māori, about 1,000 years ago. The Māori travelled the Pacific Ocean in a perilous journey with their canoes, and when they made landfall here, they quickly made the country their own.

The land of Aotearoa offered much to the Pacific people – it was a rich land, filled with forests of towering *kauri* trees, inhabited by many different bird species. The surrounding oceans also had plenty of fish. Plentiful in birds and fish, this island country meant that most could make a living peacefully. However, being human, the different tribes of Māori people who settled here would sometimes engage in battle with each other. In these conflicts, they would sometimes perform a *haka*, a type of war dance meant to intimidate their enemies, through which they would try to avoid actual combat. In recent times, *haka* have become icons of our country.

The Māori people would face a new challenge about 800 years after they first arrived. This challenge came in the form of European settlers. The Europeans realized the value of this country, and, very quickly after ‘discovering’ the land, settled in great numbers. In fact, by the year 1900, the Europeans outnumbered the Māori population by ten to one. In 1900, there were only 50,000 Māori left in the country. Around this time, the Europeans aimed to make a new country, which they thought was more civilized. To them, this meant teaching the Māori people English, and converting them to Christianity. So, the Māori language and culture were suppressed. At schools, Māori children were punished for speaking their native language. It seemed that Māori language and culture would soon die out and be forgotten, and in fact, many of the settlers hoped this would happen.

But today, the Māori culture and language are thriving and are an important part of our country’s unique identity. The number of Māori speakers is increasing, and there are now schools and universities where the Māori language is used and taught. The Māori language can be heard on television and radio, and it is frequently seen on public signs. The Māori culture has also been embraced by people of non-Māori heritage, and many Pākehā, that is, European-descended people, also use some Māori language in their day-to-day lives, just like I began talking to you today with a ‘*kia ora*.’ In fact, even my own parents have started to use a little bit of Māori language.

Māori language and culture are no longer dying. They are recognized as making our country unique. Internationally, one of the most well-known parts of Māori culture is the *haka*, because at least two of them are performed by the All Blacks rugby team, before each of their matches. Slightly less well known is that there is cultural exchange between Māori people and the Ainu of Hokkaidō. Given the recent popularity of the manga, *Golden Kamuy*, I hope the connection between cultures is given more recognition in future. Just as knowledge of Ainu has begun to spread through the *Golden Kamuy* manga, Māori language and culture has now become a symbol of our country’s heritage and identity, and is a source of pride for many Kiwis.

Unfortunately, although many people in our country now take pride in Māori culture and language, some Kiwis aren’t as open to it. Recently, there has been a discussion about making our road signs bilingual – just like in Japan, where new road signs now say *tomare* in Japanese, and STOP in English. In our country, that would be STOP in English, and MUTU in Māori. But many people have argued against it, saying it would be confusing, and would distract drivers. Does it really, though? *Tomare* and STOP in Japan isn’t so confusing.

Anyway, I for one, think that Māori language and culture is a beautiful thing. Although I’m a Pākehā, I hope you all can experience the Māori aspects of our country if you ever come to visit. If you do, I’m sure you’ll at least experience Māori language quite quickly – if you fly into Auckland airport, once you get off the plane, you’ll be greeted by a big sign that says *Haere Mai*.

## Questions, Answers and Hints:

### 1. What is the English name of the country is the narrator from?

**Answer:** New Zealand.

**Hints/Clues:** There are many – a cursory search of the name Aotearoa, or Māori, will reveal New Zealand to be the answer. Other references include the national rugby team, the All Blacks, as well as a couple of references to the people of Aotearoa New Zealand as ‘kiwi(s),’ an informal, but common label for New Zealanders.

### 2. About what year did the Europeans arrive?

**Answer:** Around 1800.

**Hints/Clues:** In the first paragraph, it’s stated that the Māori people arrived in Aotearoa around 1,000 years ago. Two paragraphs later, when the Europeans are introduced as follows: ‘The Māori people would face a new challenge about 800 years after they first arrived.’ Based on this, making a rough subtraction from the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2000-1000), adding 800 years leads to a rough date of 1800.

### 3. About how many Europeans lived in the country in 1900?

**Answer:** About 500,000.

**Hints/Clues:** It’s explicitly stated that ‘there were only 50,000 Māori left in the country’ in 1900. Prior to that, it was said that ‘the Europeans outnumbered the Māori population by ten to one.’  $50,000 \times 10 = 500,000$ . However, ‘outnumbered’ is not readily translated into Japanese, so this might require some explanation (gestures are also encouraged if reading the passage out loud).

### 4. Is there more than one kind of *haka*?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Hints/Clues:** Most explicitly, the plurality of *haka* is expressed in ‘at least two of them are performed by the All Blacks, before each of their matches.’ Attention should also be drawn to the first reference to the *haka* – ‘they would sometimes perform a *haka* [...]’. In recent times, *haka* have become icons of our country – the use of the indeterminate article ‘a’ in ‘a *haka*’ suggests that there may be more than one, and the employment of ‘have’ (as opposed to ‘has,’ used for the singular) suggests multiple *haka*(s). (Also of note is that while plural nouns in English are often labelled with ‘s,’ this is often *not* applied to words of foreign origin – for instance, while the generally uncountable noun ‘fish’ might be used as ‘fishes’ to denote different types of fish, it would be unusual to compare different types of *sushi* as ‘sushis’).

### 5. Is the narrator Māori, or of Māori descent?

**Answer:** No.

**Hints/Clues:** The most prominent clue is pragmatic: ‘even my own parents have started to use a little bit of Māori language’ – this use of ‘even (私の両親でさえ)’ would suggest that the narrator is not of Māori heritage. Another clue is the usage of ‘Pākehā,’ explicitly defined as ‘European-descended people.’ In the final paragraph, the narrator describes himself using ‘although I’m a Pākehā.’

### 6. What does the phrase ‘Haere mai’ mean?

**Answer:** Welcome (ようこそ).

**Hints/Clues:** Essentially derived from ‘common knowledge.’ The expression is introduced as, ‘if you fly into Auckland airport, once you get off the plane, you’ll be greeted by a big sign that

says *Haere Mai.*' Many airports around the world (including in Japan) have 'welcome' signs in different languages – from this 'common knowledge,' the meaning can be derived.