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**To cite this article:** Hemopereki Simon (2023) Rolling our eyes towards god: an intervention arising from mormon missionary YouTube activity and the cultural (mis)appropriation of haka, Culture and Religion, 23:1, 46-80, DOI: [10.1080/14755610.2023.2289560](https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2023.2289560)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2023.2289560>



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Published online: 05 Feb 2024.



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# Rolling our eyes towards god: an intervention arising from mormon missionary YouTube activity and the cultural (mis)appropriation of haka

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## ABSTRACT

This Kaupapa Māori Research writing inquiry explores the (mis)appropriation of haka and the social media video-sharing platform YouTube in that (mis)appropriation. The article examines the specific case of a group of Latter-day Saint missionaries in Wangarratta, Australia, who wrote and performed an English-language haka that the author finds violent and offensive. The article outlines Aileen Moreton-Robertson's White Possessive doctrine in relation to the Church and white patriarchal salvation. Haka's cultural background and appropriation are explained. Theoretical explanations of collective and cultural memory and YouTube as a social media platform and cultural archive follow. The author highlights YouTube grey literature sources on haka cultural (mis)appropriation. The 2006 case study "missionary haka" video is critiqued and analysed. Case study issues are discussed. The Church's history of racial discrimination and violence and its religious aetiology of skin colour make this video "misappropriated," according to research. This performance uses haka to promote white and religious supremacy and the idea that you must be white and/or religious to be fully human. This message helps the LDS Church mission of possessing Indigenous souls and remaining the "true religion".

**KEYWORDS** Haka; cultural (mis)appropriation; cultural memory; mormonism; YouTube; missionary culture

## The offensive (Mis)appropriative act on youtube: a prologue

A specific phenomenon exists amongst Mormon missionaries, something that I call a 'fauxka' – presented in a particular YouTube video entitled 'missionary haka' (sic).<sup>1</sup> In this video, we see a group of six LDS Church missionaries on what seems to be a rugby field, presumably in Wangarratta, Victoria in Australia.<sup>2</sup> We know they are Mormon missionaries, as they are wearing the standard Mormon missionary garb, complete with obligatory

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**Figure 1.** Screenshot of mormon missionary haka video, Wangaratta, Australia.

black name tags. (see [Figures 1 and 2](#)).<sup>3</sup> In the beginning of the video, they are in a haka line about to prepare for the 'act'. In a very strange way one points to the sky, and another bows his head. This is followed by his head going everywhere, side to side, with an attempt at whetero (protrusion of the tongue) that would be better achieved by keeping his head still. They collectively attempt to wiri with their hands stretched out like starfish. In the middle of this, their kaitataki (haka leader) emerges from the back of the



**Figure 2.** A screenshot of a copycat video of the Mormon missionary haka from a different missionary group; location unknown.<sup>5</sup>

group, obscuring the missionary 'kaihaka' (haka performers) behind him, and tries a forceful haka command.

They begin.

Kaitataki: "Wangaratta burning book!"

Whilst saying this, he three-quarter turns and walks slightly, inspecting the kaihaka as if they are on military parade.

Then he turns around while his 'roopu haka' attempt – and I really mean attempt – the haka stance of 'turiwhatia' at various angles. One even turns his body to about a 250-degree angle from the camera.

It makes me think of all the marks they would get deducted if this was a Te Matatini<sup>4</sup> event.

They start to takahi (stamp feet) out of unison, all at various timings.

Kaitataki: "Grab the book from your pants!"

In unison the Mormon Missionary roopu haka grasp onto their respective copies of the Book of Mormon above their right leg.

Kaitataki: "Slap the book on your chest!"

Katoa (Everyone): "Slap the Book on your chest!"

By now they are doing takahi in time while banging a Book of Mormon vigorously against the left breast of their respective chests.

Katoa: "Read the book, read the book!"

As they say this, the action moves to opening the Book of Mormon to mimic reading it. One kaihaka has bad timing and rhythm and does not open the book properly in time. He attempts to cover this.

Katoa: "Pray, Pray!"

With these kupu (words), they hold the Book of Mormon in one hand and slap their other hand against the other side of the book repeatedly to signify the *Anjali Mudra* hand gesture of two hands together, usually associated with praying in Christianity.

Katoa: "Read the book! read the book! Pray! Pray!"

The missionary roopu haka then shout.

Katoa: "We got the Gospel! You'll get it, get it! We got the Gospel! You'll get it, get it!"

This is done while beating both hands against their chests with a Book of Mormon in one hand. On the phrase, 'get it, get it', the kaihaka hold forth their Books of Mormon while slapping their inner elbows. This gesture, in haka, is generally used to signify sexual penetration (see Angitu 2023). This is

completed with an extended elongated ‘hiss’ from everyone involved as a form of ‘climax’ has been achieved that what lot would best be achieved in private.

Katoa: “Wangaratta!”

This is because they are based in the small Victorian town in Australia called ‘Wangaratta’. With this, they throw both hands into the air, hollering at their respective books, left hands falling between their legs as they once again try to adopt a *turiwhatia* posture.

To end this ‘haka’, they thrust out their right hands, then move their left hands forward towards the camera. Their hands are turned inwards and up in a ‘come hither’ gesture to the viewer. They repeat this twice while chanting.

Katoa: “You come(a)! You come(a)! You come(a) walk in the waters with me!”

On the last word of this chant, they raise their right arms in imitation of Mormon baptism, wait a moment, then proceed to *whetero* (proturde *tounges*).

The *roopu haka* then proceed to clown around, not taking what they just did seriously and unaware of what they just did.

Towards the end of the performance, the missionary group raise their hands, palms faced towards the audience. In Latter-day Saint tradition, this ‘right arm to the square’ gesture symbolises baptism, a religious conversion to become a member of the LDS Church. No doubt Mormons would see this gesture as familiar, welcoming, and embracing. However, the position of their hands is problematic to any genuine Māori *kaihaka*. This palm facing forward gesture, from a *haka* perspective, is very offensive. This is how you tell your audience to go away. By utilising this gesture, the missionaries are contradicting the intended message of their *haka*. This is a big no-no in Te Ao Māori. However, given the message they are selling, I would happily walk away after I picked my jaw up off the floor upon seeing this display and resisting the urge to hit something. White people will never understand the depth of being, thought, and knowledge that arises from indigenous cultural items like *haka*.

## Introduction

For myself, I have been doing *haka* since I was a baby. It has also helped that my mum’s *whānau* are renowned for being Te Arawa *kaihaka* and I have been publishing on *haka* since 2015. There has not been a stage in my life when I have not been surrounded by *Ngā mahi a Rehia*.<sup>6</sup> In 2013, I was asked to deliver a guest lecture to year-two Indigenous Studies students at The University of Wollongong. The topic was to be ‘haka’ but I was also told to relate this back to cultural appropriation. I required some practical examples

of cultural appropriation of so naturally I thought that video was the best approach to this. So I went searching YouTube for examples. In this search a strange video entitled, 'Missionary haka' by the Wangaratta LDS Missionaries in Australia made everyone gasp.

The focus YouTube video of this research in relation to the cultural (mis)appropriation of haka is fairly up there in its offensiveness to me and Te Ao Māori generally as it is being used to promote Mormon not Māori cultural memory. Te Ao Māori has been engaged in decolonising politics for around 40 years. (see Belgrave 2014; Harris 2004; O'Malley et al. 2010; Poata-Smith 2002; Walker 2004). In addition to this it bastardises haka and the ontology and epistemology the underpins it while promoting the colonising language, English. However, everything about it screams – we want to assimilate you -become white and Mormon now! Lastly, as a Kaupapa Māori researcher it is my job to provide for a path for my people to be able to decolonise.

It is offensive from of cultural (mis)appropriation by official representatives of the LDS Church. For someone who has faced ridicule and pressure to question and abandon my culture from others in the past – this act is appalling. It is horrific because I have spent a lifetime trying to be constructive with others and decolonise my own thinking and help others revitalise our language and culture. When I experienced this video I can state that it felt like being slapped with a colonising Christian message that – white and Mormon are right and the only way to be. Interestingly, when presenting the lecture students compared and made connections to the 'haka party incident' – an indication of how actually offensive it is.

In the Book of Mormon, Indigenous peoples are imagined as belonging to the 'wilderness', and white 'Gentiles' are imagined as having a manifest destiny to locate and preach to the 'Lamanite', directing Lamanite destiny and co-inheriting Lamanite land. The Book of Mormon as historically interpreted by the Church also racialises Native Americans and Tāngata Moana as 'Lamanites', divinely cursed with dark skin to mark a dark moral nature. Indigenous adherents, cast as physically and morally inferior, can only be redeemed and perfected by white intervention (Simon 2022b, 2023b). This can easily be seen as engagement in ideas found in colonial and racist discourses about Indigeneity and subhumaness (Simon 2022b).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is at odds with the decolonial and anti-colonial trend in Te Ao Māori, which emerged in the 1960s and continues today. This paradigm shift in Te Ao Māori thinking has spawned movements to promote the language and culture and to secure the cultural future of our uri whakatipu (descendants). Aotearoa New Zealand is changing as a society to be more inclusive of Te Ao Māori. More awareness of the colonial-era wars and more Te Reo Māori and tā moko (Māori skin art) representation on national news broadcasts are just two examples (see Dewes 2022; Newstalk 2022). This Kaupapa Māori writing inquiry research

study articulates a decolonising critique of cultural (mis)appropriation of haka by Latter-day Saint missionaries and others outside Aotearoa New Zealand, which is documented from YouTube video archives.

The 'Haka Party Incident' was a pivotal political event in the politicisation and consciousness of Te Ao Māori and a path to/towards decolonisation (see Hazlehurst 1988; O'Malley, Stirling, and Penetito 2010; Walker 2004). In 1978, Māori Auckland University student Hilda Halkyard-Harawira and other activists belonging to a group called *He Taua* lodged a formal protest against an engineering department tradition in which the graduating class performed a mock haka (Māori posture dance) to celebrate their graduation (O'Malley, Stirling, and Penetito 2010). By the 1970s, according to Ranginui Walker, the engineers 'tattooed' themselves with lipstick caricatures of testicles, penises, and sexual obscenities. (as cited in O'Malley, Stirling, and Penetito 2010). What had started out as a silly game had become a very serious mockery of the Ngāti Toa haka, *Ka Mate. He Taua* approached the engineering students while they were practicing the dance in 1979, and violence ensued.

Eleven *He Taua* members were charged with rioting and *He Taua*'s members were expelled from the University, but the incident was a turning point for race relations in Aotearoa. E. Turner (2018) says these events shocked Pākehā New Zealand because they refuted the 'multicultural utopia' myth and broke the idea that Māori and Pākehā were one harmonious people. They showed Pākehā settler/invaders that they could not mock Māori culture. The incident has recently been memorialised in a play titled 'The Haka Party Incident' (Moffat, Simes, and Anderson-O'Connor 2022).

In the 2013 guest lecture to year-two Indigenous Studies pupils at the University of Wollongong, we discussed how cultural appropriation and haka by the Wangaratta LDS Missionaries shocked students, who then made comparisons to the haka party incident.

Mormon missionary (mis)appropriation of haka is important to critique because:

Indigenous Researchers are there to be change agents for our communities; we are the key to explaining our point of view to the religious and scholars of religion. (Ka'ai 2008)

Critical Indigenous Studies scholars are positioned to play an authoritative role in explaining our people's views to outsiders such as Latter-day Saints. This is the fourth paper introducing Critical Indigenous studies to Mormon and Lamanite studies (see Simon 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, forthcoming). It encourages critical intercultural dialogue with, among, and between members, leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and in particular scholars who have recently made roadways to explore Indigeneity and Mormonism (see Aikau 2012; Baca 2008; Colvin and Brooks 2018; Hernandez 2021; Rensink and Hafen 2019; Also see James 1999). Te Ao Māori's cultural revival conflicts

with Latter-day Saint stances on Indigeneity because of the Church's 'gospel culture' and authoritarian, Americentric nature (see Colvin 2017).

My goal in this paper is not to force Critical Indigenous Studies upon Mormon Studies, but rather to fulfil my responsibility, as a critical Kaupapa Māori scholar, to communicate a Māori critique of a theology that demeans, appropriates, and attempts to change Māori culture (see Simon 2022a). This essay discusses how Church missionaries in Wangaratta, Australia, used YouTube to compose, perform, and commemorate a proselytising 'haka' in English. Therefore, the key research question for this piece is: how and why are these YouTube videos considered problematic by Māori hapū and iwi and Indigenous peoples more broadly? I answer that the videos must be seen as a perpetuation of white possession and patriarchal white salvation.

This paper will outline and adopt the Kaupapa Māori Writing Inquiry (post) qualitative method known as Mahi Tuhituhi, based on the work of Georgina Stewart (2021) and Hemopereki Simon (2022c, 2023a, 2023c, 2024a, 2024b). Aileen Moreton-Robinson's (2015) concept of 'the white possessive' – a major theoretical underpinning of my work – will be discussed in connection to Mormonism via 'Patriarchal White Salvation' (Simon 2022b). This paper will also explain haka and its origins, with elaborations on the relationship between haka, memory, and Mormonism. I will offer instructive examples from the YouTube video archive of the misappropriation and cultural appropriation of haka. The article will then explore the content of the Wangaratta Mormon Missionary haka as recorded on YouTube. Following this, a discussion of the issues will take place. Lastly, I will summarise the implications of this research.

## **Mahi Tuhituhi**

Before providing literature and analysis on the topic at hand I believe it is prudent to articulate the Kaupapa Māori approach<sup>7</sup> that underpins the whole discussion. Mahi Tuhituhi is a (post)qualitative<sup>8</sup> Kaupapa Māori research approach based on the work of Georgina Stewart (2021) and furthered by Hemopereki Simon (2022c, 2023a, 2024). Kaupapa Māori research serves the purposes of this article as a fundamental, well-established Indigenous research practice. Mahi Tuhituhi is a form of Kaupapa Māori writing inquiry aimed at investigating the use of academic writing as a vehicle for critical Māori ideals and political goals. As a method, Mahi Tuhituhi is consistent with a view of Kaupapa Māori as a use of the written word to speak back to the Eurocentric 'archive' underpinning the entire academy (G. Stewart 2021 as cited in Simon 2022c).

According to G. Stewart (2021) in 'Kaupapa Māori Research, Understanding Writing as a Māori Method of Inquiry', the art of writing enables Māori



academics to push the boundaries of academic traditions and procedures. Writing and research practises of all types necessitate serious ethical considerations and can benefit from Kaupapa Māori principles. The most important of these are the principles to commit to (1) reflexive interrogation of one's own presuppositions, ideas, and judgements over and beyond – but not to the exclusion of – empirical, qualitative research methods; and (2) elevating and exercising Māori conceptions of community, ethics, intellectual deliberation, and sovereignty within the domain of academia as a means of decentring Western epistemic norms, reclaiming control of Māori representation in the public arena, and reclaiming control of the public representation of Indigeneity (G. Stewart 2021 as cited in Simon 2022c).

There is a persistent bias in favour of qualitative research methods in social sciences, which remains heavily influenced by Western anthropology primarily and social science more broadly. The term 'conducting interviews' is commonly used interchangeably with 'research' (Pipi et al. 2004; Sorell 2013; G. Stewart 2021). Given the cultural preference for face-to-face methods, such as 'kanohi-ki-te-kanohi' or 'kanohi kitea', and the focus on centring Māori voices, this tendency is especially pronounced in Māori research (Pipi et al. 2004). Kaupapa Māori scholarship seeks to redress this imbalance by putting the focus squarely on the act, encounter, or procedure of Māori textual creation. The goal is to pinpoint the points during the writing process when rigid or underdeveloped Western academic research standards subtly exert influence over the author's choices while masquerading as methodological objectivity. This shifts the focus from being the subject of other researchers' methods to active, critical engagement.

From a Kaupapa Māori perspective, every aspect of the research process – from choosing a subject to the specific methods and writing style employed – should be carefully examined. Kaupapa Māori enquiry relies heavily on the researcher's ability to critically examine their own assumptions and conclusions (G. Stewart 2021). To be sure, as G. Stewart (2021) notes, I feel obligated to write from my Māori identity, but I believe that my arguments hold water across the broader field of Indigenous research. Writing (in either English or Te Reo Māori, or a combination of the two) is an effective tool for probing Māori identity; it can be used to probe Māori subjectivities and further Māori political goals. The method employed here is in deliberate accord with these guidelines (G. Smith 2003; L. Smith 2015; Simon, 2022a). The following thoughts are framed by Kaupapa Māori theory as elucidated by G. Stewart (2021).

Mahi Tuhituhi provides an alternative to Indigenous-responsive Western academic study. Historically, Eurocentric study and policy approaches, such as biculturalism, have muted or skewed the perspectives of Māori communities. Until Māori ethical norms, research designs, and spiritual or philosophical orientations are foregrounded in the writing and knowledge production

processes, decolonisation is incomplete and cannot claim a radical political orientation, as Kaupapa Māori praxis does. If our uri (descendants) are a reflection of our tūpuna (ancestors), then the stories, realities, whakaaro (thoughts and teachings), pūmanawa (traits), emotions, mātauranga (traditional knowledge), stories, and preferences of our ancestors can be seen through the written word. Without this, Kaupapa Māori studies risk being ‘domesticated’, as Graham Smith (2012) puts it. Keeping in mind that Kaupapa Māori study is politically motivated, Mahi Tuhituhi enables a critical examination of Indigenous politics and policy. The reflexive nature of post-qualitative research allows it to go beyond investigating individual cases to investigate group claims to knowledge and authority (G. Stewart 2021). Moreton-Robinson’s (2015) idea of the white possessive, and its religious extension known as ‘patriarchal white salvation’ (Simon 2022b). This will be discussed in the next section, which will serve to illustrate this point.

### The white possessive and patriarchal white salvation in Mormonism

In a reflective commentary on Mormonism and critical Indigenous research from a Māori viewpoint, I have highlighted four themes relevant to the current study:

- 1) Mormonism and other restorative practises and settler colonialism.
- 2) Addressing patriarchy in all forms.
- 3) Moving to maintain the cultural integrity of our own cultures.
- 4) Promoting engagement with the Church, especially around taonga the Church may hold or exploit.

(Simon 2022a, 6–7)

I have previously encouraged Mormon and Lamanite Studies scholars to define where they stand on decolonisation and the Church. I previously have



Figure 3. The indigenous spirituality continuum (Simon 2022b, 375).

advocated independence – including spiritual independence and cultural sovereignty – for all Indigenous peoples (Simon 2022b). This would allow Indigenous People to follow Melissa Nelson (2008)'s 'original instructions' of their cultures. Latter-day Saint leaders advise abandoning Indigenous culture when it conflicts with the teachings or dominance of the Church. Exaltation in the celestial realm requires putting God and Church above peoplehood. Church membership colonises Indigenous souls. Decolonisation requires questioning the faith. Decolonising one's Indigenous self is difficult where access to language, culture and expertise are required to do so. Exiting a high-demand religion requires 'deprogramming' (Simon 2022b see Figure 3).

For Indigenous peoples, a significant problem with Mormonism is its founding in whiteness and white supremacy (Brooks 2020; Colvin 2015; Simon 2022b). However, I have asserted that the actual problem is that the entirety of the religion and its operations is encapsulated in white possession (see Simon 2022b). In recent years, 'Gospel culture'<sup>9</sup> has led the Church to attempt to subvert and co-opt the Māori cultural revival that has started in Aotearoa New Zealand since the 1960s. This is an attempt to maintain its relevance in modern Te Ao Māori, the Church has sought to relate the cultural revival to Indigenous people's religio-colonial identity as 'Lamanites'. The Church's teachings make my identity and culturally informed ontology an offence because they contradict its authority, salvific truth, and power. Māori spiritual independence and cultural revival challenges the Church's image of Indigenous people as lost in a moral wilderness (Simon 2022b).

The Church resembles, reinforces, and collaborates with the white possessive government. Like the 'Crown' tells Māori to believe the 'treaty-truth' that Māori historically signed away their sovereignty and licenced white presence on Indigenous lands,<sup>10</sup> the Church instructs Lamanites to trust another colonially abusive institution and its 'Salvific truth'. Lamanitism is the Church's explanation of the anomaly of indigeneity, and absolute obedience is its 'solution' (Simon 2022b, 2023a) I argue that Indigenous Peoples are being asked to believe in 'patriarchal white salvation' – my riff on Moreton-Robinson's concept of 'patriarchal white sovereignty'. We are courted by a Church whose structures and beliefs that are built on white supremacy; its administration, thinking, practices, doctrine, and ordinances rely on white (and generally middle-class) men who exercise possessive logic (Simon 2022b). Members are taught to instinctively and unquestioningly 'follow the prophet' (Bartholomew 2008; LDS 2018, 2022).

Latter-day Saint tradition understands Tāngata Moana as descendants of the Nephite shipbuilder Hagoth, who in the Book of Mormon leads a colonising expedition around 55 BCE and loses several ships at sea (Alma 63:5–8). Strictly speaking, then, Tāngata Moana are descended from Nephi rather than from Nephi's wicked brother Laman. This, however, proves to be a distinction without a difference. The Book of Mormon understands 'Nephite' and

'Lamanite' less as family lineages than as racial categories to which peoples are assigned by divinely imposed skin-colour change. Repeatedly in the narrative, Lamanites become Nephites and vice versa. For instance, 3 Nephi 2:12–16 tells of a group of Lamanites who convert and are 'numbered among the Nephites; and the curse was taken from them'. Likewise, 4 Nephi tells of a period of over a century when Nephites and Lamanites unite as a single, white-skinned people, only to have self-proclaimed 'Lamanite' groups eventually reappear and exterminate the Nephites in an apocalyptic war. Latter-day Saint scholar Rodney Turner notes that although 'there is no explicit reference to the restoration of the dark skin' in this narrative at the end of the Book of Mormon, a prophecy foreshadowing this narrative in the book's early pages (1 Nephi 12:22–23) strongly implies that this skin-colour 'mark' of the curse is reimposed (R. Turner 1989). Latter-day Saints may similarly infer from the dark skin tone of Tāngata Moana that they, too, fell into sin despite their Nephite ancestry and became Lamanites through imposition of the skin-colour curse. Southerton calls the Church's othering of Polynesia 'presumptive and covert racism' (as cited in Simon 2022b, 379)<sup>11</sup>

Doctrine and priesthood monopolise salvation, according to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Book of Mormon legitimises oppression of Indigenous peoples by labelling them 'Lamanites'. Indigenous people must be humanised by the benevolence and virtue of white saviours. However, among Māori salvation requires archiving and reinterpreting whakapapa, for the Māori concept of genealogical descent from Indigenous gods is incompatible with the Latter-day Saint concept of genealogical descent from the Christian god, Elohim or biblical figures (See Simon 2024a). The Book of Mormon also teaches that salvation also demands the abandonment of Indigenous peoples' mana, for Latter-day Saint doctrine recognises no legitimate spiritual power outside the Church's priesthood hierarchy (Simon 2022b). Indeed, until recently, Mormon doctrine forbade the priesthood to black Africans and explicitly linked it with 'royal blood', imagined as racially white (Mauss 2003). And while official Church discourse has de-emphasised these concepts, they remain current in popular Latter-day Saint discourse and teaching, including at the Church-owned Brigham Young University (Brooks 2012).

Salvific power, like the sovereign power of the state, helps the church legitimise its domination of Indigenous people. Salvation civilises violence, much as the doctrine of discovery civilises dispossession. The white possessive Church uses this logic to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their spiritual practises.

Indigenous calls for decolonisation and Indigenous cultural and spiritual independence in keeping with the 'original directions' of Indigenous cultures pose a challenge to the Church and its concept of white patriarchal salvation. My analysis suggests that the Church's

efforts in recent decades to deracialise its doctrines are best understood as a obfuscation, not an elimination, of the Church's white possessiveness. To 'decolonise', the Church would need to withdraw from Indigenous lands. The Church 'seems antithetical to decolonisation', I wrote in *New Sociology* (Simon 2022a). Mormon Studies, as a discipline, has not interacted much with critical Indigenous studies, so it has not seriously discussed decolonisation. (Simon 2022b)<sup>12</sup>

The Latter-day Saint salvation contract enforces Indigenous cultural and historical amnesia for the benefit of the Church and its white members. This accommodates settlers in three different ways. First, concealing historical colonial brutality shields white adherents from Indigenous retributions and calls to decolonise. Secondly, it insulates settlers from any self-imposed white guilt for or obligation to repent of their historical seizure of Indigenous land, language, spirituality, and culture and for the contemporary social, economic, and religious inequalities that have followed there from. Lastly, The Book of Mormon and the Church deflects and projects colonial brutality back onto Indigenous peoples.

To this amnesia about colonial brutality, the Church's revisionist theology now adds amnesia about white supremacy and possession. In the end, this helps white churchgoers keep the soteriological benefits of being 'white and delightful',<sup>13</sup> like being able to navigate with ease within a faith that gives primacy to white settler/invasion religious worldviews. For Lamanites and descendants of Hagoth, submission to the Church remains the only path to full humanity (Simon 2022b). Native Americans and Tāngata Moana remain barbarians who need salvation from the Lord and his true Church. The Church can subtly alter Book of Mormon passages that promise to miraculously turn redeemed Indigenous peoples 'white and delightful', but it cannot change the overwhelming message of the Book, so rooted in white possession, white paternalism, and the Christian 'civilizing mission' to extinguish Indigenous cultures. Indigenous peoples historically have been dehumanised by governments to justify their crimes, and then those same governments have attempted to rehabilitate us by praising our humanity and good deeds. These aims are accomplished in Mormonism through white patriarchal power and salvation that the religion promotes (Simon 2022b).

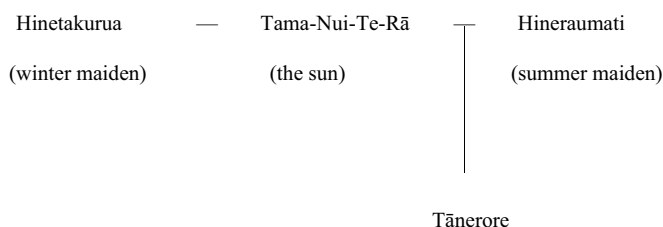
## Haka as cultural text and cultural (Mis)appropriation

E tū i te tū a Tānerore  
 E haka i te haka a Tānerore  
 Kaua i te tū, i te haka a te keretao  
 (Kāretu 1993, 24)

These are important lines from a haka by a famous Māori cultural figure named Timoti Kāretu. They tell the haka performer to stand up and do the dance in the same way that Tānerore did (Simon 2015). What is haka then? Haka is a style of dance that was created by the Māori people. It is a general term for all kinds of Māori dance. Matthews (2004) says that it is a posture dance usually accompanied with repeated or yelled song or words. One of the most important parts of haka is using movements that involve the whole body to emphasise the words. Gardiner (2007) says that it refers to a range of Māori performances that incorporate dancing with chanting or singing. These performances are used for a variety of purposes like welcoming guests, conveying stories, and celebrating successes (Matthews 2004). Matthews also notes:

Performing arts fulfilled a wide variety of social and political functions in traditional Māori society. These functions included welcoming guests (haka pōwhiri—haka of welcome), fare-welling and mourning the deceased (waiata tangi laments), attracting a mate (waiata whaiāipo—‘sweetheart songs’), giving advice or instructions (waiata tohutohu—message-bearing songs), restoring self-respect (pātere—fast chants), intimidating an adversary (peruperu—war dance) and the transmission and making public of social and political messages (haka taparahi, ngeri—ceremonial haka). Regardless of function, the key aspect in Māori performing arts was the words and the message they contained. However, it was the body that was the instrument and vessel of delivery. (Matthews 2004, 9)

Haka reflects and is embedded in the history and mythology of the Māori peoples (Mingon and Sutton 2021). As academics, we recognise that haka is frequently misnamed as the ‘Māori War dance’. But according to Māori philosophy, haka is actually the dance ‘about the celebration of life’ (Kāretu 1993; Nopera 2017; Rangiwai 2022; Simon 2015). The origin tale of the haka demonstrates this point.



According to tradition, the haka was created by Tānerore, the son of Tama-nui-te-Rā (the sun) and his second wife Hineraumati (the summer maiden). On hot summer days, the ‘shimmering’ atmospheric distortion of air erupting from the earth is personified as ‘Te Haka a Tānerore’ (Hyland 2015). Māori performing artists use the wiri – a trembling movement of the hands – as a symbol for this concept (Simon 2015).

This study focuses on haka taparahi, a style of haka performed without weapons, which Kāretu calls the most popular form of haka taparahi. Te Rauparaha's 'Ka Mate, Ka Mate' is the most famous haka taparahi, originally a ngeri or spontaneous action ceremonial haka (Simon 2015). Bredan Hokowhitu (2014) says that 'Ka Mate, Ka Mate' is the most widely recognised Indigenous cultural appropriation (p. 273). Kāretu (1993) claims that the haka, 'ka mate, ka mate' has 'become the most done, the most maligned, the most abused of all haka' (as cited in Simon 2015).<sup>14</sup> Hyland 2015 argues that the vaudeville use of haka for tourist shows and sports teams is eerily similar to the historical framing of Indigeneity as the 'savage', denigrating the practice if not its power, authenticity, or veracity. In some cases, as in the haka party incident, haka is represented as vulgar, cruel, or backward, in contrast to progressive colonial society. Neo-colonialist history portrays Māori culture as obsolete, including the haka (Hartigan 2011).

Previously I stated that, 'the effect of its use by the national rugby team and others places it firmly, rightly or wrongly, in the New Zealand psyche' (Simon 2015, 89). Linda Dyson comments that because of this, haka has come to be used as a symbol of national pride. Assimilation of Maori culture into a mythologised sense of unique 'New Zealandness' is on display here, illustrating how diversity is reduced to a mythologised symbol of national cohesion (Dyson 1995). It is noted that haka was deeply impacted by the arrival of the coloniser (O'Carroll 2009, 50).

Ritchie (1989) comments Māori culture has faced issues such as land dis-possession, disruption of stable living, authority system destruction, invasive schools, language loss, disease, demoralisation, population decimation, assimilation policies, religious imperialism, prejudice, monoculturalism, cultural take-overs, Treaty promises abdication, and resource capture. New haka have been less common as Te Reo Māori has been in decline since the 19th century. As the number of native speakers of Te Reo Māori continues to dwindle, so too does the number of people who can fully appreciate haka performances for what they truly are (Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010; Kāretu 1993). Every time they perform, haka artists must show their fullest level of commitment and energy. A. Armstrong (1964) says that even if the words spoken in a haka are those of peace, the actions must be fierce in order to convey the necessary enthusiasm and seriousness. They need to be clear, concise, and focused.

The term 'misappropriation' is central to the study of haka. Others condemn the practice of reusing forms and ideas derived from other cultures as, at best, disrespectful and, at worst, potentially detrimental to cultural identity, while some view it as harmless (Bradford 2017; Malik 2017 as cited in Nute 2019, p. 67). Wilson (2020) states that misappropriation is especially harmful when the originating group is a minority that has been oppressed or exploited or when the material is sensitive. A legal definition can be provided by Scafidi (2005), who

explains that it is ‘taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, or artifacts from someone else’s culture without permission. This can include unauthorised use of another culture’s dance, dress, music, language, folklore, cuisine, traditional medicine, religious symbols, etc. It is most likely to be harmful when the source community is a minority group that has been oppressed or exploited in other ways or when the object of appropriation is particularly sensitive, e.g. sacred objects’.

On the difference between cultural appropriation and misappropriation, Metcalf (2012) comments that fashion is a particularly common place to see examples of cultural appropriation. It is the general practice of taking elements from other cultures and making them your own. Cultural misappropriation, in contrast, is more specifically a practice wherein one culture (typically one with a track record of oppressing other cultures) takes elements of another culture (typically a minority) without permission. The value of defining cultural misappropriation is that ‘one can understand the use of “misappropriation” as a distinguishing tool because it assumes that there are 1) instances of neutral appropriation, 2) the specifically referenced instance is non-neutral and problematic, even if benevolent in intention, 3) some act of theft or dishonest attribution has taken place, and 4) moral judgment of the act of appropriation is subjective to the specific culture from which it is being engaged’ (Springer 2018).

Māori are upset and dissatisfied to see their culture stolen by the same people who suppressed and protested them with the Tohunga Suppression Act 1907. Māori objections is more about the object’s tapu (sacredness) than its value. Haka can be considered tapu or sacred to Māori. Haka preserve iwi narratives so future generations do not forget their tūpuna (ancestors’) triumphs and struggles. Haka abuse could dishonour its creators.

In relation to the haka party incident, comments by prominent Māori stated that haka ‘is considered a sacred performance that embodies and symbolises the strength and power of the tribe’ (Hazelhurst 1989, 4). As Jackson points out: ‘if the haka is done properly, with respect, there is no abuse. If it is mocked, if it is made obscene, then there is an abuse. Under Maori law, that sort of abuse was a crime’ (Jackson 1991, 39). Ranginui Walker (2004) quotes kaumatua Dick Stirling: ‘in former times anyone who performed the haka in a slovenly way was chastised ... [and anyone] who performed someone else’s haka in an insulting manner could be killed’ (p.224). Walker (1979) also comments that Auckland University engineering students have celebrated graduation with a mock ‘haka’ since 1954. They wore grass skirts, painted themselves in obscenities, and did their ‘mock haka’ with oaths, racist slogans, and obscene motions (as cited in O’Malley Stirling, and Penetito 2010, 298). This is signified with the words of the mock haka as follows:



Ka mate! Ka mate! (stamping feet and slapping thighs)  
 Hori!<sup>15</sup> Hori! (left hand patting the head, right hand simulating masturbation)  
 I got the pox from Hori! Hori!  
 (He Taua 1979, 1)

Haka appropriation has continued despite the haka party incident. I have noted that haka has become a world symbol of indigenous dance due to globalisation and non-Māori groups appropriating it (Simon 2015). The All Blacks' use of Derek Lardelli's 'Te Kapa o Pango' allows non-Māori to interpret the haka as a dance of war or 'doing combat'. This contributes to the misconception that haka is only performed by men, and uninformed people continue to call haka a 'war dance'. People's ignorance of Te Ao Māori and Te Reo Māori prevents haka from communicating the ideas it's supposed to. Haka are vehicles of memory and have been used historically to oppose white oppression (Simon 2015). Even if the Defence Force or All Blacks have a haka written for them, it is Māori by origin and construction. The 'ready-made' haka cannot be separated from its cultural context simply because it was written for a specific purpose. The actions are cultural symbols and the words impart mātauranga (Māori knowledge). It becomes political when done on a national or international stage under a nationalist banner. Haka strengthens Māori and non-Māori identities, creating a national identity and marking everyone as 'New Zealanders'. This reinforces colonial views about what non-Māori can own or want from indigenous peoples (Simon 2015)

Thus, my goal is to critique Mormon missionary misappropriation of haka and to address the lack of indigenous knowledge it evinces in using haka to promote 'online proselytising' via digital videos. Young Mormon missionaries need to understand that in misappropriating haka, they are not merely 'goofing around'; they are engaging in a deeply political and colonial act of cultural violence and are disrespecting a practice that Māori hold as sacred as Latter-day Saints hold the temple rituals which they swear never to discuss with outsiders.

This act promotes Mormon ontology while misappropriating Indigenous dance, replacing Māori cultural memory with Mormon-based memories. Mormons gain from this because it fosters 'fraternity' and promotes the Church. Therefore, the next section will discuss communal and cultural memory theory's importance.

## Collective and Cultural memory

This essay is highly relevant to the concept of 'collective memory' or 'cultural memory' – the representation of the past and its transformation into common cultural knowledge by successive generations through 'vehicles of memory'.

Collective memory is formed socially and shapes group identity and survival (Simon 2015).

Alon Confino (1997) defines collective memory as ‘the representation of the past and the making of it into a common cultural knowledge by successive generations in “vehicles of memory” such as books, films, museums, commemorations, and others’. As another writer puts it, culture is ‘objectivised’ in ‘texts, images, rites, buildings, monuments, cities, or even landscapes’ (Assmann 2011, 128; Green 2008, 104). Halbwachs’s (1992) important work has been qualified, critiqued, and expanded by other scholars since its emergence. Assmann (1995) notes that ‘collective memory’ challenges and improves upon the concept of ‘racial memory’ (e.g. in Jungian psychology), which was too tied to biological determinism. Halbwachs (1992) says that memory helps people to live in groups and communities, and living in groups and communities helps people build their memories (as cited in AlSadaty 2018).

Assmann (2011) stresses that while individuals store and recall memories inside their minds, the collective creates a memory through memorials and cultural practises that exist outside the individual. To define a group identity, key memories must be repeated and concretised. These constructions store cultural symbols and information and must be understood through institutionalised heritage (Assmann 1995). Cultural items, like a *mōteatea*, can function as memory carriers for people who might have invested cultural memories in them (Assmann 2011; Simon 2023b).

Collective memory shapes religious, ethnic, and national identities (Cairns and Roe 2002). It is formed in a social environment and helps groups ‘construct identity’ (Assmann 1995, 130). Cultural memory not only shifts from generation to generation, but is also constantly renegotiated to meet current needs. It always includes current knowledge, so it requires self-reconstruction. ‘Identities and memories are highly selective, inscriptive rather than descriptive, serving specific interests and ideological positions’, says John Gillis (Gillis 1996, 4). Assmann (2011) similarly notes that vehicles of memory can serve to either preserve or erase memory. Memory, identity, ideology, social limits, and power all support each other. Cultural memory is used to reactivate a useful past in dialogue with commemorative and material entities that inform group legacy (Simon 2015, 2020, 2023b).

Assmann distinguishes communicative and cultural memories (Assmann 1995). Communication spreads interactive memories. One person may tell another a joke, or one group may tell another about something they did. Communicative memories are like ‘everyday memories’ with a short time horizon, as opposed to cultural memories that can last centuries (Hirst and Manier 2008). Cultural memories are created when communicative memories become ‘objectivized culture’ or ‘culturally institutionalised legacy of a society’. Thus, verbal memories reside in everyone and are passed on.

Cultural memories ‘in the world’ are preserved by memory symbols. Cultural memories probably reach the ‘mode of reality’ when people become aware of them and incorporate them into how society sees itself (Hirst and Manier 2008).

Haka is a cultural memory symbol, a vehicle for creating group identity and preserving collective memory in Māori cultures (Simon 2015). Haka, waiata (song), and mōteatea (sung poetry or laments) are our, history, literature, and poetry. These cultural items reflect customary Māori philosophy. Thus, waiata and haka give a different perspective on Aotearoa New Zealand’s history than Eurocentric history books and archives. Waiata and haka help preserve Māori language and customs and are therefore bound to a Māori identity (Ka’ai-Mahuta 2010).

YouTube is a powerful tool to transmit Indigenous culture like haka and waiata and provides for ways to do it without contradicting original instructions. It removes the barriers of distance and lack of expertise within whānau that have experienced enforced cultural poverty as a result of colonisation. The use of YouTube teaches correct use of haka and other cultural items (see Almostco n.d.; TGI Native & Ngāti Hine 2010) It also holds onto prior national and regional competitions (see Angitu 2023) and has the potentiality if used in the right way to decolonise our people. It teaches and provide examples of how to be authentically Māori. Therefore, the article will next discuss how YouTube interacts with memory and produces cultural (mis)appropriation.

### **YouTube, memory and cultural (Mis)appropriation**

YouTube forms and connects identities, emotions, and people (Smit, Heinrich, and Broersma 2017). Hoskins (2009) was one of the first to use the phrase ‘networked memory’ to describe how digital technologies shape memory and identity. YouTube’s engaging features let people and organisations create their own forms of communication and influence others. The field of ‘digital heritage’ examines how technology affects memory consumption and creation. Waterton, Watson, and Silverman (2017, 4) praise the ‘virtually unrestricted chances to (re)interpret, critique, subvert, reinforce, and (re)deploy’ heritage online. Documentaries, podcasts, tributes, and first-person accounts build virtual memorial landscapes. Knudsen and Stage (2013) call YouTube comments ‘commemorative emergence’ because they add new meaning to commemorative videos. Knudsen and Stage (2013) describe YouTube as ‘the arena or sociopolitical place in which individual producers articulate their specific ... memories’ (p. 419). Beciek and Juul say ‘memory work happens somewhere’ (Beciek and Juul 2008, 111). In the digital age, one such somewhere is YouTube.

Over the past decade, there has been a drastic change in online behaviour because of the rise of new social media channels, including social networking sites, discussion boards, podcasts, webinars, and Q&A

sites (Colliander, Dahlén, and Modig 2015; Habibi, Laroche, and Richard 2016). Social media can be categorised into many different types, including social networking (Facebook), professional networking (LinkedIn), video sharing (YouTube), knowledge-blogging (Substack), and micro-blogging (Twitter) (Balakrishnan and Griffiths 2017, 365). Social media channels have become one of the main platforms of communication and engagement with people, allowing for new forms of participation, interactivity, and even co-creation (Colliander, Dahlén, and Modig 2015).

Three PayPal employees started YouTube in February 2005. Google bought YouTube for \$1.65 billion two years later, when Wikipedia, Myspace, and Facebook were becoming increasingly important (Arthurs, Drakopoulou, and Gandini 2018). YouTube lets users post, share, and watch videos. Adobe Flash Video technology displays a wide range of user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, music videos, and amateur content like video blogging and brief original videos. YouTube is the most popular social media video site. Unlike traditional media, YouTube lets users connect, engage, view, collaborate, and evaluate their communication system (Gill et al. 2007). According to the Pew Research Center, 81% of 15–25-year-olds and 73% of adults use YouTube. Over 2 billion users view over a billion hours of video each day (Perrin and Anderson 2019). YouTube has become the second most viewed website in the world, despite many social media failings. Thus, it has become a unique repository of popular culture, growing synchronically and diachronically.

Snickars and Vonderau's (2009) edited collection highlights YouTube's platform relevance for cultural output, and Burgess and Green (2008) highlight its unique ability to host, facilitate, showcase, and store 'vernacular' culture. In recent years, a multidisciplinary field of inquiry has used the platform as the main case study to investigate broad research issues about digital culture and society. YouTube has been used to study political expression (Halpern and Gibbs 2013), masculinity (Morris and Anderson 2015), monetisation (Postigo 2016), parenting and digital literacy (Lange 2014; Livingstone and Sefton-Green 2016), and music consumption (Airolidi, Beraldo, and Gandini 2016; Vernallis 2013). In contrast, YouTube as Indigenous cultural archive has received little academic attention, and so has the issue of cultural (mis)appropriation on YouTube.

Stout and Buddenbaum (1996) write, 'religious worldviews are created and sustained through ongoing social processes' (7–8). Levey (2016) argues that YouTube as an archive provides 'sites of Mormon memory, an open-ended alternative to a memorialised space'. 'Witness videos' refer to eyewitness recordings. Like memorial sites, there is another type of 'witness video' that is self-recorded to remember an act. We call these 'memorial videos'. Online witnessing transforms the witnessing dynamic. Levey (2020) notes that YouTube is available to both new and future audiences, and that its 'like' and 'comment' functions

enable interactivity for a global audience. Witnesses don't need to be present to criticise (or praise) a live performance.

Grey literature sources from YouTube show how haka has been widely (mis)appropriated over time. The All Blacks popularised this (mis)appropriation in the 1970s by stealing haka for use during rugby games, as shown in a 1973 video available on YouTube.<sup>16</sup> In 2019, One News critiqued the 1973 performance in preparation for an All Blacks game.<sup>17</sup> A YouTube video comparing the 1973 haka with a 2011 All Blacks haka 'Kapa o Pango' performance shows the All Blacks' standard of haka performance has vastly improved in the intervening decades.

A second example is an advert by the Bakery Industry Association of New Zealand. The advert depicts a cartoon group of Gingerbread men doing the haka 'ka mate, ka mate' to advertise The New Zealand Bakery of the Year Awards for 2007 entitled, 'The Gingerbread Men'.<sup>18</sup> A New Zealand news outlet reported,

Northcote's Awataha Marae spokesman Anthony Wilson says that the haka is important to Māori culture and questions its use in this context. "It has got to be treated with respect. It is easy to grab a cultural icon like the haka and use it, but unless you use it in an appropriate manner it can be very misleading in terms of what it represents. There's an obvious disconnection between the haka and gingerbread men." ... He says that in situations like this, companies and organisations should be consulting with cultural communication groups before making decisions that could be deemed culturally inappropriate. (Stuff 2009)

Interestingly, the Chief Executive of the Bakery Industry Association, Belinda Jeursen, stated that 'there is definitely no intention for the video to be culturally insensitive' and that 'they felt they took appropriate steps to ensure the promotion would not cause offence. We made sure to use exactly the same words as in the haka and also to maintain the integrity of it' (Stuff 2009). The Association decided that screening the advert was appropriate after consultation with their communications company (Stuff 2009).

In several ways, Māori and other Indigenous cultures are used to promote products. The most infamous of these types of adverts utilising haka is known as the 'Female Empowerment Haka', badly performed by white women.<sup>19</sup> The advert was used to promote Italian carmaker Fiat's small car range. While in white Western circles this may have been seen as 'empowering', the car maker clearly did not understand haka and ignored advice against using it from Italy-based staff of Aotearoa New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NZPA 2006; Sydney Morning Herald 2006). Instead of using a haka wāhine (women's haka), Fiat essentially copied the All Blacks' masculine haka performance which exponent Derek Ladelli (Ngāti Porou) described as an 'adulterated version of Ka Mate' (NZ Herald 2006).<sup>20</sup> Another example of this type of YouTube video is the William Lawson Scotch Whisky ad.<sup>21</sup> Palmer (2009) comments that in this ad, 'a bunch of men in kilts wait for what looks like a Maori rugby team to finish an

inaudible haka before lifting their kilts in response'. At least they are incorporating aspects of their own culture, the haka seems to be done, by the Polynesian looking team, in an authentic and contextualised way, and the lifting of kilts, in response by the Scottish team, might be considered by some to be an appropriate response. While this is probably less offensive than the other examples above, it must be noted that the video reinforces the problematic stereotypical association of haka and Māori with alcohol (see Ebbett and Clarke 2010; Huriwai 2002; Mancall, Robertson, and Huriwai 2000; Muriwai, Huckle, and Romeo 2018; Ratū and Poutāpeta 2019). (In a more egregious example of this stereotype, a variety show portrayed a group of males on stage performing an alcohol-guzzling Australian adaptation of haka known as 'The Chuka'.<sup>22</sup>)

Another commercial that (mis)appropriates haka is the Coca Cola Haka Namie Amuro Commercial.<sup>23</sup> The commercial portrays 'actors dressed as All Blacks performing the haka alongside Japanese dancing girls' (Nippert and Rushworth 2010). Ngāti Toa spokesperson Te Ariki WiNeera said,

an advertising agency had approached the iwi through the New Zealand embassy in Tokyo [and] we told them that if they wanted to use Ka Mate they needed to talk to us first. They declined to engage when they saw we were serious about protecting it. (Nippert and Rushworth 2010)

Another example of the (mis)appropriation of haka is the University of Arizona 'Wildcats' basketball team's controversial instruction video, 'how to haka'.<sup>24</sup> Tongan scholar David Fa'avae expressed disappointment in the display by Sione Tuihakamala (the leading instructor of the video) and his teammates, commenting, 'Hearing Sione pu'aki (pronounce) Māori words in the haka made me worry about how Tongans in the diaspora contribute to cultural appropriation and it hurts. It kind of hurts more because he's a fellow Tongan' (Pers. comm., Facebook Messenger 2023, March 5). In 2015, the University came under fire for cultural appropriation of haka in college sports games (see Hinnen 2015; Kennedy 2015; Stack 2017; Yeoman 2015). The use of haka in American high school and college sport also continues to be an issue. It is particularly noted that this tends to be associated with Tāngata Moana diaspora wanting to express 'their culture' (Stack 2017). This is particularly tied to Pacific Islander adherents of the Latter-day Saint faith tradition.

Another example found on YouTube that has subsequently been withdrawn from the archive but is preserved on multimedia news sites is 'The NHS Nurses' haka.' In this case, staff at a West Devon healthcare facility filmed themselves performing a rewritten English-language version of haka, inspired by Ka Mate and the All Blacks, proclaiming triumph over Covid-19. They decorated their cheeks with black face paint and circled their heads with white tape (Middleton 2020). The video clearly reflects stereotypes of haka as a savage 'war dance'. The nurses apologised and withdrew footage in

response to sharp criticism from Indigenous activists. It was branded by Otago academic Karaitiana Taiuru as ‘blatant cultural abuse that is verging on being racist’.<sup>25</sup> Taiuru also wrote that the headbands and face paint were ‘reminiscent of culturally appropriated Māori dolls’ and reflected a ‘cultural stereotype’ of what Māori people look like. Taiuru further commented that ‘there is no reasonable excuse why any semi-educated person with access to the internet, from anywhere in the world, [should] not know that mocking another person’s culture is offensive’ (Middleton 2020).

Clearly, YouTube functions as a valuable cultural archive of cultural (mis)appropriation of haka and Indigeneity more broadly. However, none of the examples given so far demonstrate a religious dimension. Therefore, the next section will provide analysis of the ‘[Mormon] Missionary haka’, which adds spiritual insult to cultural injury by (mis)appropriating haka for purposes of proselytising.

## Discussion

YouTube is a cultural archive because it has so much content on music, film, drama, politics, and more. Users can also post and share content documenting personal and community experiences. Researchers and others studying contemporary culture can use the platform’s search feature to find specific videos and content. YouTube’s massive video archive preserves cultural artefacts. Users can upload and share historical, traditional, and cultural videos globally. The platform’s search and recommendation algorithms push certain videos, shaping social memory. However, YouTube’s algorithm promotes videos that fit users’ interests, creating a filter bubble, supporting insular cultural narratives, and potentially spreading misinformation.

In addition to constructive cultural artefacts, YouTube also preserves artefacts of non-Indigenous cultural abuse. It records and promotes disrespectful non-Indigenous people dancing, singing, or otherwise (mis)appropriating traditional symbols and themes. YouTube empowers and even collaborates in the reinforcement of Indigenous stereotypes, such as that haka is a ‘war dance’. Interestingly, the platform also provides for debate about cultural exploitation and how to prevent it. In that debate, and in viewing the video content, the content is transformed into cultural memory.

The cultural memory point aside, it is without question that the Mormon ‘missionary haka’ is a form of cultural (mis)appropriation. Over the years, I have gotten mixed reactions when I show Māori people this video, from eye rolling to anger. However, the consensus is that they should not be doing that. The result of this English-language haka, if it can be called one, is to offend Indigenous Peoples worldwide, and particularly Māori. To paraphrase Taiuru’s response to the NHS haka, there is no excuse for anyone with an internet connection to not be informed about how taking an Indigenous cultural dance

is offensive (Middleton 2020) Writing a Mormon-Christian faith-based version of a 'haka' in English is unwanted and offensive. This particular display by the Wangaratta missionaries shows clear ignorance and arrogance. Part of the problem is that it is a clear from the goofing around shown at the end of the clip that the group does not recognise its wrongdoing here.<sup>26</sup>

Historically, the Book of Mormon is an artefact of the white Mormon and American cultures of colonisation, especially since Joseph Smith stereotyped and perhaps even plagiarised the Iroquois nation's culture (Murphy 2020; also see Mormonism; Live 2022). Mormon Studies has a major insularity problem because largely white Mormon scholars seek to disavow the reality and depth of their culture's connections to racism and white possession. These connections problematise or even falsify the Church claims to truth and patriarchal white authority. This video reveals the persistence of Mormon colonialism and evidences Mormon settler/invasion guilt. It embodies the Church's long history not only of plagiarism and appropriation from Indigenous cultures, but also of racist performance of Indigenous stereotypes – what Deloria (2022) calls 'Playing Indian' (Also see Smith 2015). Mormonism's traditional 'Cumorah Pageant', discontinued in 2021, was a similar egregious example of White Mormon performance of Lamanite stereotypes, appropriating Indigenous land, culture, and identity (Rensink and Hafen 2019; also see Argetsinger 2004; Armstrong and Argetsinger 1989; Bell 2013; Dunstan 2020; McHale 1985). This Mormon cultural phenomenon that normalises of cultural (mis) appropriation and its harms is interesting when engaging haka. It re-enforces the false white-gaze of haka being a 'war dance' and the traditional racist stereotypes of Māori being war-mongering and in the wilderness found in offensive and disproven martial race theory (Simon 2015, 2021).

Haka holds a special position in Mormon culture. Effectively it is used to promote Mormon collective memory not an Indigenous one. The New Zealand Church mission produced a haka in 2016, like the New Zealand Defence Forces or All Blacks. The haka welcomes incoming missionaries. This contrasts with Mormonism's contentious gospel culture and their attempts at whitening Lamanites and historical Church haka prohibitions (see Colvin 2017; Newton 2014). From an Indigenist viewpoint, doing haka – even one created by Māori bishop Herewini Jones – for Mormon religious purposes is confusing.<sup>27</sup> Since Māori deities made haka, Mormon and Christian beliefs conflict with it. Even if Māori Mormon belief holds that Atua Māori, like Tāne, was a Mormon god in the pre-existence or the literal Adam as per some Māori Mormon folklore (See Simon 2024a). Such assertions do not recognise that haka is deeply embedded in and endowed with Māori spirituality. The 'Polynesian' diaspora's search for genuine cultural representation has led to the formation of hybrid Mormon-Polynesian identities in places like Hawai'i and Utah. Such efforts lead to appropriation of



haka in the United States, including Disney's bastardisation of haka in the film *Moana*, that facilitates blending and bastardisation of Pacific cultures, driven by commercial profit and American assimilationism. This both reflects and shapes Polynesian diaspora attempts to share 'their culture' by (mis)appropriating haka, which is Māori, not 'Polynesian'. Similar criticism can be levelled against the those propping up the Church's Polynesian Cultural Centre which removes mana from the cultures whose dances are been exploited for monetary and religious profit as form of proselytising is attached to the overall tourism experience in La'ie (See Aikau 2012; Trask 1991; Author Experience)

A link exists between the long-term presence of Mormonism among Māori from the late 1880s, the culture of Mormon missionaries, and the emergence of the haka in Mormonism and American sports like football. The All Blacks' global influence and reputation, as well as their colonisation and appropriation of the haka, have led to a greater awareness of the haka in non-Māori contexts, whether it be in Disney movies, Italian car adverts, or rugby games. In all these contexts, but perhaps especially in the Mormon 'missionary haka', there is an unsavouriness to this act. Underlining this is the racist ontology within Mormonism that promotes white supremacy and possession (See Simon 2022b) This, as mentioned above, stems from the racist religio-colonial identity of Lamanites in the Book of Mormon. When we consider the desire for mainstream white Mormons to authenticate the Book of Mormon and patriarchal white salvation via its acceptance by Indigenous people, missionary performance of the haka looks even more problematic.

The YouTube recording of the 'missionary haka' demonstrates religious violence. This is because these missionaries, in their ignorance, have interpreted haka as a 'war dance'. The historic nature and relationship of the Church with settler invader colonialism presents a significant problem here (see Boxer 2009; Murphy and Baca 2020; Murphy 2003, 2020; C. Smith 2016; Simon 2022b; Tenney 2018). The intention of the missionaries is to spread Church teachings, as displayed in their 'haka'. Implicit in the Book of Mormon's theology of Indigenous salvation, which requires that Indigenous people be made 'white and delightsome', is a genocidal ideology of racial disappearance. Against this backdrop, the lines, 'we got the gospel, you'll get it, get it' – with no other solution or option provided – has an ominous ring. Interestingly, the Mormon missionary haka in the lines, 'you come(a), you come(a), you come a walk in the waters with me' reflects the Book of Mormon's portrayal of Indigenous people as backwater savages with improper patterns of speech. In some ways, it's incredible that the missionaries uploaded this video to YouTube, forever brazenly memorialising their own cultural insensitivity and whiteness.

## Conclusion

What research on (mis)appropriation of haka exists has traditionally focused on the national rugby team, the 'All Blacks'. This is because of the disrespectful and commercially exploitative way in which the All Blacks have deployed haka. But cultural (mis)appropriation of haka has a lengthy history, and YouTube, as a social media video sharing platform, can serve as an important cultural archive of (mis) appropriation of Indigenous cultures that goes well beyond the All Blacks. Numerous online recordings document the (mis)appropriation of haka, with the Mormon 'missionary haka' serving as this study's primary focus and point of comparison. Given the LDS Church's history of racial discrimination and violence and its religious aetiology of skin colour, the term 'misappropriation' certainly pertains to this video. Given the church's past of white supremacy and possessiveness of Indigeneity, the performance of this haka is especially violent. Unfortunately, this performance uses haka, a sacred Indigenous dance, to preach white possessiveness and the message that, in order to be fully human, you must make yourself white. Through this message, the LDS Church can realise its capitalist goals of acquiring ownership of Indigenous souls and maintaining its status as the only true religion. People who are not of my culture should at least have the decency to realise that it is not 'kosher' to steal another group's culture for your own benefit (whether that be commercial, religious, or otherwise), even if we Māori cannot completely control how aspects of our culture are exploited.

Tēnā Koutou

## Notes

1. Snoops999 (2006). 'missionary haka.' 22 July 2006, YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k71eSLJAXRA>; For the purposes of this research Mormon Studies is taken to mean, '[the] study of the churches, peoples, theologies, and other phenomena that trace their roots to the religious movement of Joseph Smith, Jr. When it interacts with exclusively Mormon epistemologies, Mormon Studies analyzes them per se and uses them to delineate the scope of studies, but does so in the context of and interacting with non-Mormon academic epistemologies. Through the Mormon Studies discipline Mormons, Mormonism, and the Mormon experience can motivate adaptation and nuance in the non-Mormon methodologies and theories deployed' (Griffin and Haycock 2015)
2. See Snoops999. (2006). "missionary haka." July 22, 2006, YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k71eSLJAXRA>.
3. For information on the history of the Mormon missionary name tag and photo example, see Ann Laemmlen Lewis <https://yakimamission.wordpress.com/2017/08/07/the-history-of-lds-missionary-name-tags/>
4. Te Matatini is a bi-annual festival event for kapa haka (Māori performing arts). The event is a competition where roopu (haka teams) compete for awards and overall champions. Teams are chosen through regional competitions held in the off-year. All teams competing represent their particular region. The event is also

known as the Olympics of Te Ao Māori. For more information see Royal-Taeao K (2020). Te Matatini. *The Choral Journal* 60(8), 47–50.

5. See Solesbee, C. 'LDS Missionary Book of Mormon Haka,' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DON642wFvyw>
6. Ngā mahi a Rehia refers to leisure pursuits. Akey part of this are the traditional performing arts like haka. For a general explanation see Calman (2013). For a more comprehensive understanding of this term in relation to haka see Papesch (2015).
7. For more information on Kaupapa Māori Research and its approaches refer to Henry and Pene (2001); Pihama (2010); Simon (2022a); and L. Smith (2015). For more on its application to Mormon and Lamanite Studies see Simon (2022a).
8. (Post)qualitative inquiry is methodological (but without methods, as a critique of pre-described qualitative methods is at the core in post-qualitative inquiry). For an understanding of the author's use of '(post)qualitative,' it is highly recommended that the reader see Le Grange (2018), Østern et al. (2023), and Ulmer (2017).
9. For more information on gospel culture see Colvin (2017).
10. Elise Boxer offers in line with this the argument that Indigenous sovereignty in the Book of Mormon is contingent upon a Christian conversion. See Boxer (2019). Additionally, Thomas T. Murphy (2003) notes that Lamanites become 'white' and are often integrated in Nephite communities upon conversion to Christ as described in the Book of Mormon.
11. The author notes that Lamanites become 'white' and are often integrated into Nephite communities upon conversion 'to Christ' in the BOM. See T. Murphy (2003).
12. In recent years there has been growing efforts to explore the place and identities of indigeneity within Mormon Studies this has been primarily done by the publication of two significant volumes being 'Decolonizing Methodologies' and 'Essays on American Indian and Mormon History. In addition to this I have noted in previous research that 'the title of this publication [Decolonizing Mormonism] is technically incorrect and may be considered misleading by some. It would have been far more appropriate, but more complicated, to call the commentary something like Postcolonial Mormonism, for the notion of achieving a decolonised religious institution seems antithetical to the concept of decolonisation' (Simon 2022a, 1). Thus most discussions around decolonisation and Mormonism within the literature prior to 2022 focuses more so on describing post-colonialism not decolonisation.
13. For context on racism and the LDS Church associated with this phrase see Mueller (2017), Colvin and Brooks (2018), Simon (2022b).
14. For examples of the ways haka is being abused by the National Rugby team The All Blacks (and its major sponsors), particularly through advertising, refer to Hokowhitu, 'Haka: Colonised Pysicality'. Hokowhitu (2014) comments that '[t]he taking over of the All Blacks' primary sponsorship by the global sports clothing company Adidas signified a mass wave of marketing based on selling the exoticism of 'traditional' Māori masculine culture. At the time, the marketing campaign led to questions by Māori regarding intellectual property rights and the misappropriation and commodification of Indigenous culture' (274).
15. Hōri is an ethnic slur used against people of Māori descent. The term comes from a Māori-language approximation of the English name George, which was very popular during the early years of European colonisation of New Zealand.

By means of synecdoche, the term came to be ascribed firstly to any unknown male Māori and then as a negative epithet to all male Māori (see Hōri (slur) 2023). Additionally, in modern usage it is also utilised to mean an unkept and/or uncivilised Māori. For more information and history on the topic see Linguistic and Second Language Teaching, 2008, <https://linguisticsmassey.wordpress.com/2009/06/05/dropping-the-h-bomb/>; Coombes (2016). Indigenism, Public Intellectuals, and the Forever Opposed – Or, the Makings of a ‘Hori Academic’. In D. Mertens, F. Cram, & B. Chilisa (Eds.), *Indigenous Pathways into Social Research* (pp. 71–88). Routledge.

16. See ‘haka all blacks 1973,’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htCTWZqCMhQ>
17. See One News (2019). ‘Watch: All Blacks perform haka in 1973 – it’s not great,’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MY2hcl7D3Q>.
18. See Bakery Industry Association of New Zealand (2007). ‘The Gingerbread Men Haka,’ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urA9m7N\\_liY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urA9m7N_liY)
19. See ‘Best of the Worst Haka Commercials – Italian Fiat,’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0RK5qflePGM>
20. For an example of haka wāhine see ‘Black Ferns (Aotearoa New Zealand Women’s Rugby Team) Women’s Rugby World Haka,’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzg4rJJNX30>.
21. See ‘William Lawson’s Haka,’ <https://youtu.be/lHbEjMJ80yo>
22. See ‘The Chuka (The Aussie Haka),’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPgntI-vrDc>
23. See ‘Coca Cola Haka Namie Amuro Commercial,’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOJJOW7eokU>
24. See ‘Arizona Football: How to Haka,’ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d\\_rMNPf63Jc&t=249s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_rMNPf63Jc&t=249s)
25. I disagree with Taiuru’s assertion. The NHS haka is blatantly racist as underpinning it is notions of haka being a ‘war dance,’ ideas of savagery and the enactment of the martial race theory. For more on the martial race theory see (Simon 2015).
26. In the post peer-review phase of this journal article I came across another Mormon haka-based video called, “LDS Haka” uploaded by AMBITIONtube on April 29, 2016. The same analysis provided in this article can be applied to this particular video also. The video would appear to be performed in a Mormon chapel cultural hall in the Halifax Ward in Nova Scotia, Canada. To some degree the newer video is more problematic than the Wangaratta event as highlighted by the description which states, “The wicked Lamanites perform the Haka to scare away the righteous Nephites. The Nephites return the Haka in an attempt to win over the hearts and minds of the Lamanites. The Lamanites hearts are softened and join the Nephite army.” (AMBITIONtube 2016). To view this video see: AMBITIONtube. 2016. “LDS Haka.” 29 April, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDcvjhmeBWI&t=2s>.
27. See, ‘Church unleashes new haka,’ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLRz\\_hN\\_l\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLRz_hN_l_4); Also see the last section of this video ‘New Zealand Hamilton Mission Haka,’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxEjw2iCzeU>

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This research was completed as part of Working to End Racial Oppression (WERO) which is funded by a Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment Endeavour Fund Grant 2020 [UOWX2002].

## Dedication

This paper is written in memory of Te Reo Whakakōtahi Chulla Wall.

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