

Decolonizing the Dictionary: A Preliminary Investigation into Country Names in Māori

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Abstract

Three questions are asked. (1) To what extent have Māori names for countries been influenced by British colonization and the assimilationist policies (including the focus on learning and using English rather than Māori) of the colonialists, settlers and their descendants in Aotearoa/New Zealand? It is shown that almost all the names are transliterations of the English names for the countries. (2) To what extent can Māori names for countries be decolonized? It is shown that three approaches to reforming the names can lead successfully to this end. (3) What role could the first Māori monolingual dictionary, now being prepared, play in dealing with any change from the colonized names to decolonized names? Three alternatives are put forward and it is suggested that, making the decolonized name the main entry and cross referencing the colonized names to the main entry, could lead to decolonized names gradually becoming those most used.

1. Introduction

Precolonial Māori had no contact for over several hundred years with other places except through oral histories about their places of origin, e.g. Hawaiki. It was not until the 1760s and 1770s with the arrival in Aotearoa/New Zealand of the English explorer Cook, who had bilingual Tahitian-English speakers with him, that the situation changed. After Cook other explorers, whalers, sealers and missionaries arrived and gradually the country became a settler colony, and later a settler state. The English speaking British were the dominant colonizers, and had covert and overt aims for civilizing the Māori by minimizing Māori culture and language with avowedly assimilationist policies from about 1870 to 1970. The physical aspects of colonization involve controlling or occupying the land and its resources and destroying the strong link between the tribes and their own clearly marked territories. The mental and spiritual aspects involve replacing traditional knowledge systems with British ones, e.g. for cosmology, religion, social values, classification of living things, kinship, land ownership, personal names and leadership. The British wanted to create a new country in their own Anglocentric image. Today there are about 600,000 Māori in a total Aotearoa/New Zealand population of about 4,000,000, the majority of whom are descendants of the earlier English speaking settlers.

In what sense can the Māori names for the countries of the world be regarded as part of colonization? From the beginning of colonization, Māori became more and more familiar with other countries of the world and, as the colonized people, transliterated the English

names for the countries into Māori. Hence Māori names for countries are part of colonization.

Three questions are addressed in this paper. In regard to the Māori names for countries:

1. To what extent have Māori names for countries been influenced by English colonization?
2. To what extent can Māori names for countries be decolonized?
3. What role could a Māori monolingual dictionary play in dealing with the change from the colonized names (Question 1) to decolonized names (Question 2)?

For the purposes of this study “country names” includes the names of countries, Crown dependencies, dependent territories, overseas territories, selfgoverning territories, and some other entities, such as Bosnia, Holland, Palestine, the USSR and Yugoslavia. The local short names (the local names hereafter) of the countries, rather than the local long names, are considered in this paper, e.g. Brunei and Cabo Verde, rather than Negara Brunei Darussalam and Republica de Cabo Verde.

2. Māori dictionaries

The first Māori dictionary, a bilingual Māori-English one, was prepared by missionaries in 1820, and this dictionary, extensively revised, is now in its seventh edition and has had twenty one printings. Others followed, particularly after World War II, and currently there are some eighteen bilingual both way dictionaries in print, one available on cd and three on the web. Māori names for countries are included in some of the dictionaries. Those prior to the early 1990s contain just a handful of country names, while the four larger ones published in the last decade contain large numbers of such names.

This study focuses on the four larger dictionaries:

- (1) Ryan (2002): a list, *Names of countries*, in the front matter.
- (2) Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori: (i) a list, *International place names*, in the back matter, presented as having “been translated into Māori” (2003), and (ii) an additional list of 25 names (2001). The two are treated here as one.
- (3) Cormack (2002): a list, *Countries of the world – Ngā whenua o te ao*, in the section entitled “Words in thematic lists”.
- (4) Moorfield (2000): the country names are found in the dictionary itself.

The dictionaries include names for 230 countries. There are 304 different names listed, some in two or more dictionaries. The number of countries that each dictionary covers and the number of country names included in each dictionary, are shown in Table 1.

DICTIONARY	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF COUNTRY NAMES
Ryan 2003	69	75
TTW 2003 and 2001	214	216
Cormack 2002	193	194
Moorfield 2000	51	58

Table 1: The number of countries and country names in each dictionary

3. Māori names for countries

Māori is a Polynesian language and differs in many ways from English. Four matters in particular need to be considered when putting names into Māori.

- (i) The twenty sounds in Māori are represented by the following letters: a ā e ē h i ī k m n ng o ō p r t u ū w and wh.
- (ii) The syllable shapes in Māori are V, VV, CV and CVV.
- (iii) Stress in Māori is regular, and depends in the main on the presence or absence of macronized vowels and diphthongs.
- (iv) In Māori, adjectives come after nouns.

In observing these and other Māori language conventions, the 304 Māori names for countries have been formed in nine ways.

- (a) **Using foreign letter(s).** There is only one example: Hawai'i (Hawaii) (Māori does not have a glottal stop).
- (b) **The name is unchanged.** Examples are Panama and Tonga.
- (c) **Transliteration through changing one or more letters for the Māori name.** Examples are Amerika (America), Hāmoa (Samoa), Mehopotamia (Iraq), Monako (Monaco) and Tominika (Dominica).
- (d) **Transliteration through adding one or more letters for the Māori name.** Examples are Eritēria (Eritrea) and Omana (Oman).
- (e) **Transliteration through dropping one or more letters for the Māori name.** Examples are Etonia (Estonia) and Inia (India).
- (f) **Transliteration through a mix of (c), (d) and (e) above for the Māori name.** Examples are: Āketina (Argentina), Koroātia (Croatia), Kuatamāra (Guatemala), Raoho (Laos) and Whītī (Fiji).
- (g) **Partial translation for the Māori name.** Examples are Āwherika ki te tonga (South Africa), Ngā Moutere Kāmana (the Cayman Islands) and Hato Marino (San Marino). In this group of names, examples of the English words that are translated are "Saint" (Hato), "landforms" (e.g. motu, moutere and maunga), compass points (e.g. puku, tonga, raki and uru) and "united" (kotahitanga and hongongo). Two words, "land" and "stan", which occur in the English names of several countries have been transliterated into Māori in a variety of ways. Thus:
 - (i) **land:** "rana" (Pōrana - Poland), "rangi" (Hinerangi - Finland), "ranga" (Tairanga - Thailand) and "reni" and "rani" (Niu Tīreni and Niu Tīrani - New Zealand).
 - (ii) **stan:** "tāne" (Pakitāne - Pakistan), "tāna" (Awhekenetāna - Afghanistan) and "tānga" (Katatānga - Kazakhstan).
- (h) **Full translation for the Māori name.** Examples are Te Tai Rei (Ivory Coast) and Whenua Kākāriki (Greenland).
- (i) **Inappropriate translation.** Examples are Kāmaka (Gibraltar) and Whenua Korukoru (Turkey).

It is not possible for the present to place four names in one of the above eight categories as the origin of the Māori name is not known (see Category (j) in Table 2). Examples are Putu (Libya) and Kuhu (Syria).

Table 2 indicates, the distribution by of the 304 names in the above categories by numbers and percentages.

FORMATION OF COUNTRY NAMES	NUMBER OF NAMES	PERCENTAGE OF NAMES
(a) Using foreign letter(s)	1	0.3
(b) Unchanged name	9	3.0
(c) Through changing letter(s)	44	14.5
(d) Through adding letter(s)	9	3.0
(e) Through dropping letter	9	3.0
(f) Through a mix of (c), (d) & (e)	191	62.8
(g) Through partial translation	26	8.5
(h) Through full translation	3	1.0
(i) Inappropriate translation	8	2.6
(j) Origin is not known	4	1.3
TOTALS	304	100.0

TABLE 2: Formation of country names in Māori

Table 2 shows that Category (f), the mix of changed, added or dropped letters, accounts for the highest percentage of names and that names in which letters are changed, Category (c), is the second highest category. The Māori names for countries in Categories (c), (d), (e) and (f), totalling just over 83% of the names, are transliterations into Māori of the English names. Only 1.0% of the names have been fully, and 8.5% have been partially, translated from English into Māori.

However, the situation for the translated names is not as simple as it may at first seem. Those names in Category (g) have only been partially translated; e.g. Ngā Moutere Puhi is given as a translation of the British Virgin Islands, whereas the meaning is only “Virgin Islands”. For one name in Category (h), Te Tai Rei for Ivory Coast, the translation is apposite, but the other two are questionable. Thus, “kākāriki” for the “green” in “Greenland” refers to the colour green, while “matomato” for the “green” in “Cape Verde”, refers to growing vigourously or verdant. Are these appropriate translations? In Category (i) the translations are inappropriate. For example, Whenua Korukoru (Turkey) means the Land of the Turkeys (birds), not of the Turks; Te Whakaora (El Salvador) means the salvation, not The Saviour; Kāmaka (Gibraltar) means a rock or pebble, not The Rock; and Te Poho o Pita and Te Parihi Tapu have religious meanings (the “Seat of Peter” and the “Holy See”) rather than the name of the country, Vatican City State.

4. Decolonizing country names

4.1 Decolonization

Decolonization means reversing the consequences of colonialism through resuming control of one’s own destiny. This would involve regaining control of the land and other resources, revitalizing cosmology, religion, social values, classification of living things, kinship, personal names, leadership, reasserting Māori identity and rights and revitalizing the Māori

language by removing all unnecessary colonial accretions. This latter process would include discarding, where possible, transliteration of English names for countries.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand many places have only a Māori name. Where English names have replaced traditional Māori names, a new system of bilingual names has started to be implemented, e.g. Taranaki/Mount Egmont, Aoraki/Mount Cook, Te Whanganui-a-Tara/Wellington and Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa/Pacific Ocean. The name New Zealand has been transliterated as either Niu Tirani or Niu Tireni, but Māori have gained widespread support for the country to be called Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Māori names are precolonization names, often unfamiliar to most nonMāori and, through reusing them, Māori are decolonizing place names within Aotearoa/New Zealand.

To what extent can this decolonization process be extended to replace the transliterated English names for countries by Māori names that respect the local names, through being based on the local names of countries (when they are not English names) rather than the English names for the countries?

4.2 Three alternatives

There appear to be three alternatives for forming Māori names for countries.

Alternative 1: transliterate into Māori the English name of the country. In this alternative the English name for a country is borrowed and transliterated into Māori through changes in spelling, syllabification, stress and word order. This is the present practice, accounting fully for some 83% of the current Māori names for countries and partially for a further 8.5%.

Alternative 2: transliterate into Māori the local name of the country. This alternative, whereby the local names of the countries are transliterated into Māori, recognizes the languages of the local names but does not take any account of meaning. This approach parallels Māori wishes to have their own language and place names recognized within Aotearoa/New Zealand by the English speaking majority by according the same recognition to the languages used in place names in other countries.

Alternative 3: ascertain the meaning of the local name of the country and translate that meaning into Māori. In many cases a meaning can be ascertained for the local name and consequently that meaning can be translated into Māori as the country's name in Māori.

4.3 Examples of applying the three alternatives

Some examples of the Māori names for specific countries that result from applying the three alternatives are shown in Table 3. As can be seen the possible Māori names for the countries can vary considerably from alternative to alternative.

NAME IN ENGLISH	LOCAL NAME (Roman script)	MEANING OF LOCAL NAME IN ENGLISH	POSSIBLE MĀORI TRANSLITERATION OF THE		A3: POSSIBLE MĀORI NAME THROUGH TRANSLATING THE MEANING OF THE LOCAL NAME
			A1: ENGLISH NAME	A2: LOCAL NAME	
Australia	Australia	southern (land)	<i>Ahitereiria+</i>	<i>Ohitereiria</i>	Whenua Tonga
Bhutan	Drukuyul	land of the thunder dragon	Putana+	Turuku-iuru	Whenua o te Tarakona Whatitiri
Cape Verde	Cabo Verde	green cape	Kapo Wherite	<i>Kapo Wherite</i>	Kūrae Matomato+ or Kūrae Kākāriki
Gibraltar	Gibraltar	the mountain of Tahri	Kipirareta	Kipirareta	Maunga o Takiri
Iceland	Island	ice land	Ihiranata	Ihiranata	Whenua Tio
India	Bharat	the name of a mythical founder	Inia+	Parata	-
Japan	Nihon	true/real sun	Hapana+	Nihono+	Rā Motuhenga
Netherlands	Nederland	low lying land	Neteranata	Neteranata	Whenua Tāpotupotu
Scotland	Scotland	land of the Scots	Hokotiranata	Hokotiranata	Whenua Hokoti
Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	lion mountain	Te Araone+	Hierarione	Maunga Raiona
Uzbekistan	Ozbekiston	land of the Uzbeks	Uhipekītāne+	Ohipekitone	Whenua Ohipeki

A1, A2 and A3 = Alternatives 1, 2 and 3.
 + = names from two or more of the four dictionaries

Table 3: Examples of Māori country names by Alternatives 1, 2 and 3

Alternative 1 continues using the transliteration of the colonized names for countries. Both Alternatives 2 and 3 break away from the English names for countries and can therefore be regarded as two different ways of decolonizing the country names. Which alternative takes decolonization the furthest is a moot point as Alternative 2 respects the local language through transliterating the local name, while Alternative 3 respects the local language through translating the meaning of the local name.

5. Country names and the Māori monolingual dictionary

What role could the Māori monolingual dictionary, currently under development, play in dealing with the change from the colonized names (Question 1) to decolonized names (Question 2)? This question raises two issues.

First, to what extent are the names in two of the dictionaries - Te Taura Whiri (1996) and Cormack (2000) – being used by Māori. As there is no substantial corpus of Māori as yet, it is not possible to determine with any degree of sophistication what country names are actually being used. However, as the dictionaries are recent, it is not improbable that only a few of the 304 names in the four dictionaries are in common use, with the remainder being not widely known.

Second, should the dictionary include the 304 Māori names which, as shown, are almost all recent transliterations of the English names? Or should the dictionary take a different approach and replace many, if not most, of these names, i.e. take on a language corpus planning role? Would it be too confusing to propose new names by using

Alternatives 2 and 3, names which would have the effect of decolonizing the Māori names for countries?

There are three alternatives for the monolingual dictionary.

Alternative A: enter only existing names. Only the 304, mostly transliterated Māori names for 232 countries should be entered in the dictionary.

Alternative B: enter only decolonized names. As indicated, names resulting from both Alternatives 2 and 3 can be considered as decolonized names, with Alternative 2 being the one that is parallel to Māori actions to decolonize place names in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Initially having both names in the dictionary could be confusing but as most of the names are probably not yet widely known the confusion would be minimal.

However, there are difficulties for the dictionary in immediately using Alternative 3. First, considerable research is needed to find out the meaning and pronunciation of many of the local names. Second, the meaning of some local names is either not known, is not clear or is a matter of dispute. Third, the question arises as to how far should one go in establishing a meaning: the United States of Amerigo Vespucci? The British Virgin Queen Islands? The Land of the Angles? The Land of the Scotti tribe from Ireland? Fourth, in some cases new Māori words may need to be developed.

Alternative C: enter both existing and decolonized names. The third alternative is to include both the colonized names and the decolonized names as they are developed. The colonized name and the decolonized transliterated and/or translated names would be entered, and the user would then be referred to the main entry. For example, where the translated name is the preferred name:

- (i) **Ohipekitone** [transliterated local name] ⇔ Whenua Ohipeki
- (ii) **Uhipekitane** [transliterated English name] ⇔ Whenua Ohipeki
- (iii) **Whenua Ohipeki** [translated name]... he whenua kei roto Āhia-ki-te-Waenganui [remainder of entry]. Ingoa rerekē: Ohipekitone, Uhipekitane.

Such entries would achieve two ends for the user: they will (1) emphasize the decolonized name and (2) indicate that there are one or more other names for the same country, should the user find the colonized names or wish to use them.

6. Conclusion

This paper has addressed three questions.

Concerning the first, it has been shown that, in the four selected dictionaries, almost every Māori name for a country is a transliteration of the English name for the country. These transliterations have arisen mostly as a consequence of assimilationist policies and practices by the dominant English speakers of the settler colony and, later, the settler state towards the subordinated Māori. In the few part translations, it is the simplest part of the name that has been translated, e.g. Saint, land, various landforms and compass points, with the more difficult remainder of the name being transliterated.

The second question asked to what extent can Māori names for countries be decolonized. It was shown that there are two alternatives to the transliteration of the colonized names. The first takes the local, rather than the English, name for the country and transliterates that name. The second ascertains the meaning of the local name and translates

that meaning into Māori as the Māori name for the country. It is suggested that both alternatives decolonize the names through respecting the local names.

Third, could the proposed monolingual Māori dictionary play a significant role in the decolonization of the Māori names for countries. This can be achieved, it is suggested, by making the decolonized name the main entry and including the colonized names but cross referencing them to the decolonized name.

Decolonizing the names will take some time as much more research needs to be done into the spelling, the pronunciation and the meanings of the local names of countries and consultation will need to be undertaken about the acceptability of the decolonized names. In the future it would be expected that, as decolonization proceeds, the colonized names would gradually give way to the decolonized names.

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