

*Article*

# **No 's' in te reo Māori? Colonisation, orthographic standardisation and a disappearing sibilant**

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## **ABSTRACT**

It is practically universal, in contemporary works dealing with te reo Māori (the Māori language) to observe that there is no 's' sound in the language. This applies to plural forms of nouns (for which there is a tendency in English, when it comes to foreign nouns, to pluralise by adding an 's') and in the vocabulary more generally. This article investigates the evidence for the claim that in some Māori dialects, the 's' sound was used historically, and explores a range of possibilities for the consonant effectively disappearing from spoken te reo Māori by the middle of the twentieth century, and much earlier from written forms of the language.

## **KEYWORDS**

Colonisation, Māori, standardisation, orthography

## **Introduction**

By the 1840s, a substantial degree of orthographic standardisation of te reo Māori had been achieved, despite the fact that the first efforts to convert the language into a written form had only occurred around seven decades earlier. This trend towards greater standardisation accelerated from the mid-1810s, and was led primarily by missionaries. However, this process was occurring in an environment where there was a substantial degree of dialectical variation among speakers of te reo Māori. The ensuing standardisation of the language in text inevitably resulted in the extent of this variation being reduced dramatically. One of the consequences of this was that some distinctive

pronunciation features were lost, including the 's' sound which was evidently in use among some Māori communities in the Northland region of New Zealand at least (and possibly elsewhere in the country, although there is insufficient surviving evidence to verify this).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were practically no texts being published in te reo Māori which contained the 's' sound. However, some words in te reo Māori continued to be pronounced with an 's' sound until around the middle of the century in a few locations in the country among native speakers of the language. It is probable, although not certain, that the standardisation of the language in print by the middle of the nineteenth century, in which the 's' was removed, contributed to the decline of its use in speech (although obviously there was some lag in the effect of this). The argument could therefore be mounted that the standardised orthography of the language was contributing factor to later standardised pronunciation, although obviously, other variables were also at play. Ironically, the only 's' that appeared in connection with te reo Māori, and which persisted (albeit with diminishing frequency) until the end of the twentieth century, was in the pluralisation of Māori nouns. This trend relied on the English inflection of adding 's' to nouns, including nouns from languages other than English (in this case, te reo Māori).

This work commences with a survey of this process of pluralisation, followed by an examination of the early history of the standardisation of the orthography of te reo Māori. The concluding section considers the evidence of the 's' sound traditionally appearing in some words in te reo Māori, and the possible influence that an increasingly standardised written form of the language had on diminishing and eventually eliminating the sound from te reo Māori.

## **The pluralisation of te reo Māori**

'There is no 's' sound in Meow-ree'. This injunction from my (Pākehā) primary-school teacher stuck with me for decades afterwards, and remains a common rule, applied principally (and correctly) to plural forms of nouns in te reo Māori. The general rule is that nouns are not declined in te reo Māori as they are in English. Since the

beginning of this century, for example, references of 'Maoris'/'Māoris' in non-fiction works are extremely scarce. A survey of twenty-four works published since 2000, and selected at random as background reading for this article found no examples of nouns in te reo Māori appearing in a plural form by the addition of 's'. However, there still seems to be (based on personal observation) a tendency for some speakers to add 's' to plural forms of words in te reo Māori when speaking, even though the practise barely occurs in text.

The issue of the pluralisation of nouns in te reo Māori – through the addition of an 's' by (mainly) English speakers – can be accounted for by this being a subset of the more widespread practise of adding an 's' to nouns from other languages (regardless of whether they are regular nouns or not in their original language) in order to render those nouns in their plural form. For example, the German nouns 'blitzkrieg', 'leitmotif', and 'poltergeist', are all pluralised in English by adding 's' to them (whereas in German, their plural forms respectively are 'blitzkriege', 'leitmotive', and 'poltergeister'). Research shows that speakers using word from another language tend to apply certain rules from their native language if their familiarity with the other language is not sufficiently developed (Hamada & Koda, 2008; Sussex, 1979), which accounts for this phenomenon. However, English appears to be distinct in one respect in this area. As a consequence of its growing globalisation, there are now examples emerging of the practice of the pluralisation of nouns in English with 's' beginning to spread to other languages (Shintani & Ellis, 2010).

Given the almost universal tendency for English speakers to pluralise foreign words by the addition of 's' to them, it is unsurprising that this pattern extended to te reo Māori. However, against the trend of the increasing ubiquity of English worldwide, this tendency is in evident decline in New Zealand, with nouns in te reo Māori now rarely pluralised according to the English rule of adding an 's', even though this was a relatively common occurrence among non-speakers of te reo Māori in the country just two generations ago.

The process of eliminating the anglicised plural 's' from nouns in te reo Māori has been accomplished through a combination of the use of the language in the media, and the growth in the number of people formally learning the language (Benton, 2015;

Rankine et al, 2009; Deverson, 1991; Bauer, 1995; Onysko & Calude, 2013). One of the most significant aspects of this trend, from a sociolinguistic perspective, is that it defies the greater tendency among English speakers to anglicise the plural forms of non-English nouns.

To say, then, that there is no 's' sound in te reo Māori when it comes to the plural form of nouns remains correct. However, such an assertion is based on rectifying the mis-pluralisation of nouns in te reo Māori by English speakers who have used those nouns in sentences spoken in English. In te reo Māori, plurality is usually denoted by other methods, such as the use of the plural article or the appearance of a macron for a particular vowel sound in the noun (Biggs, 1955; Tomalin, 2006). The fact that there is no plural 's' in te reo Māori is a rule without exception (Williams, 1930; Harlow, 2010).

## Early efforts at standardising te reo Māori

While 's' is never used in te reo Māori to denote the plural form of a noun, though, the proposition that there is no 's' sound at all in the language deserves more scrutiny. The case for the absence of the consonant altogether from te reo Māori is strong in most contemporary sources dealing with the language (Head, 1989). The 's' is absent from the Māori alphabet, and does not appear in any significant texts in te reo Māori (such as newspapers, books, and academic works).

Before examining the possibility that, despite these assertions, an 's' sound did appear at one time in te reo Māori, it is necessary to examine how the forces of standardisation begin to bear down on the language from the late eighteenth century. This process commenced in March 1770, when Joseph Banks, the naturalist who was accompanying James Cook's expedition to New Zealand, produced a list of forty-three words in te reo Māori, with the help of the expedition's translator, Tupaia (Smith, 2009) (who was from Ra'iātea in the Society Islands).

The words that Banks compiled comprised mainly of terms for parts of the body, and numbers from one to ten (Banks, 1773). The list was made up of four columns: the first containing the English words; the second and third the translations of these from te reo Māori in the North and South Islands respectively; and the final column, the

equivalent words in Tahitian, which Banks added for comparative purposes. He also made a few notes on some of the dialectical differences that he observed, as well as recording fragments of grammar that he was able to assemble:

*The Genius of the Language especially in the Southern parts is to add some particle before a noun as we do 'the' or 'a'; 'the' was generally He, or Ko; they also often add to the end of any word, especially if it is in answer to a question, the word Oeia which signifies yes, really, or certainly. This sometimes led our gentlemen into most longwinded words, one only of which I shall mention as an example. In the Bay of Islands a very remarkable Island was calld by the natives Motu Aro: some of our gentlemen askd the name of this from one of the Natives, Who answerd I suppose as usual Kemotu aro; the Gentleman not hearing well the word repeated his question, on which the Indian again repeated his answer, adding Oeia to the end of the name which made it Kemotuaroeia: this way at least and no other can I account for that Island being calld in the Log book &c Cumattiaroweia (State Library New South Wales, 2004, 248-9).*

Sydney Parkinson, another member of the expedition, similarly made a record of a few aspects of New Zealand's indigenous language. His *Vocabulary of the New Zealand Tongue* contained sixty-seven words (Parkinson, 1773). Three years later, the naturalist William Anderson, who was on Cook's last voyage to New Zealand, also produced a te reo Māori vocabulary, made up of twenty-one words, and was designed to help future visitors to the country communicate at the most basic level with its indigenous occupants. And in 1793, the British administrator of Norfolk Island, Lieutenant-Governor Philip King, began producing his own vocabulary of te reo Māori, which ended up containing 199 words – by far the most comprehensive written work on the language to this time (King, 1793).

As missionaries started to enter the country from 1814, embryonic efforts were made at introducing literacy to Māori, even though a standard orthography of the language was still decades away. In July 1814, one of these missionaries, Thomas Kendall, wrote that '[t]he natives pronounce with difficulty the letters C, G, H, J, X, and Z. The remainder of the English alphabet they can articulate very well. It is my intention in my little vocabulary of the language to substitute K for the C' (Kendal in Elder, 1934, 68). Kendall worked on a small dictionary and grammar of te reo Māori, which when completed contained 322 words and seventeen short phrases (Kendall to Pratt, 1814).

From this time, missionaries assumed the dominant role in converting te reo Māori into a written form. From the second decade of the nineteenth century, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) (based in London) began issuing orders to its missionaries in various parts of the world to undertake translations of religious material in indigenous languages. 'As soon as possible, devote yourself to the proclamation of the Gospel in the Susoo tongue', was one such instruction to missionaries in West Africa. A missionary in Nepal was told the same time by the CMS that '[w]e should think...you well employed if you could translate the Scriptures into the Thibet tongue' (Pratt, 1849, 109, 211). In August 1815, a similar request was sent to Kendall: '*We shall hope to hear that you have made proficiency in the New Zealand tongue; and that the way will be thus prepared by you for the Translation of the Scriptures*' (Pratt to Kendall, 1815). This was the first sign of something resembling a policy on te reo Māori devised by the British (Stanley, 1992).

One of the fruits of this policy was Kendall's 1815 work, *A Korao no New Zealand, or, The New Zealander's first book: being an attempt to compose some lessons for the instruction of the natives* (Kendall, 1815). Its 54 pages consisted of an alphabet, numbers, a basic vocabulary, some pronunciation suggestions, and a few essential sentences. The idiosyncratic nature of the transcriptions of words in te reo Māori that Kendall made can be attributed to the fact that he was only familiar with the dialect in the Bay of Islands, where he was based (Binney, 2005), and that some of the words he obtained from his Māori informants might have been simplified or modified by those informants in order to help him (Paterson, 2014). When it came to spelling, he relied partially on a Tahitian orthography which he had access to (Binney, 2005), along with his own English-influenced improvisations. The way in which the sounds of the language came across to the ears of European transcribers at this time was a crucial issue (Smyth, 1946).

It was not long after Kendall's book was published that some of the orthographical choices he had made (and which had subsequently been adopted by others) came in for criticism. One settler argued that the 'apparently natural defect in their [Māori] organs of speech has been consolidated and rendered permanent from the missionaries *having discarded the letters* [author's italics] b, c, d, f, g, j, l q, s, v, x, y, z, from the alphabet' (Brown, 1851, 100). A fellow missionary was only mildly positive about the work, informing the CMS that 'although very defective yet it will be of some use, if it were

but to teach them the alphabet and a beginning for further improvement' (Hall to Pratt, 1816, 222).

A major advance in the conversion of te reo Māori to a more standardised written form occurred when the CMS organised for Professor of Arabic (and later Hebrew) at Cambridge University, Samuel Lee, to produce a more thorough dictionary and grammar of te reo Māori. This was a major step towards what can be termed a form of 'metropolitan Te Reo' – that is, a language that was becoming pan-tribal in its standardised orthography and vocabulary (Muhlhausler, 2014). European ideas about the importance of linguistic consistency were now becoming more influential in the process of converting te reo Māori into text (Rule, 1977) – something that was augmented by the impression of authority that the written word seemed to carry (Ong, 1982; Greenfield, 1972).

Text was fixed, would not yield to arguments or condemnation, and had an authority that was indifferent to the status of whoever was reading it (Roberts, 1997). Lee's 1820 book, *A Grammar and Vocabulary of the Language of New Zealand* (Lee & Kendall, 1820) was produced based on the information on te reo Māori provided to the professor by two informants, the Ngāpuhi chiefs Hongi and Waikato (Church Missionary Society, 1820). This immediately meant that Lee's work would be sourced from one particular dialectical area of New Zealand, and could not have any pretence of being a comprehensive representation of all the varieties of te reo Māori in the country. Lee's approach to the undertaking reveals the extent to which it would serve the cause of linguistic standardisation:

*With respect to the New Zealanders, care has been taken to represent their language in a manner as simple and unembarrassed as the nature of the subject and materials would admit. In doing this, the first point aimed at, was, to make the Alphabet as simple and comprehensive as possible, by giving the vowels and consonants such names and powers as were not likely to be burthensome to the memory or perplexing to the understanding; and for this end, the division into vowels, diphthongs, and consonants, as well as the names of each, as laid down in the Sanscrit Grammars, has been preferred; though the scantiness of the New-Zealand sounds has made it impracticable to follow their arrangement in every particular: it was not possible to illustrate every sound by English examples: some are therefore left to be learnt from the mouths of Natives (Lee & Kendall, 1820, i).*

Lee's book was based on what were described at the time as 'fixed on scientific principles' (Church Missionary Society, 1820), but inevitably, there were several deficiencies in the attempts made to standardise the use of certain aspects of the language (Schutz, 1995; Elder, 1932; Williams to Marsh, 1824; Carleton, 1874).

The process of converting te reo Māori into text in these various predominately missionary publications had the effect of minimising the language's variety, and instead, inadvertently promoted the notion of a single, standardised version of te reo Māori (at least in print form) at this stage. In the ensuing decades, the increase in the range and quantity of works printed in te reo Māori – most with a fairly standardised form of spelling and grammar – undoubtedly contributed to the reduction of some of the more extreme dialectical differences that existed in the language up until this time, as did the rapid expansion of literacy in Māori communities, along with much greater Māori mobility (mainly through transport by ships around the country during this era). William Colenso, a missionary who had established the country's first printing press in 1835, later commented on the extent to which such changes were occurring:

*I regret to say, that this pure and ingenious Maori nomenclature did not last very long, it gradually died away, partly through the carelessness and the ignorance of the foreign settlers, and partly through the clear capacious memory of the Maori by which they were enabled to remember the patois names of common things, &c., as used by the early settlers and visitors, and in doing so not un-frequently escaped more or less of ill-words. Moreover the Maoris in the earliest days of the Colony, and for some time previous, were very prone to abandon pure Maori among themselves for the incorrect broken Maori of the settlers; for as the Maoris had considered them, at first, as being a superior race, they largely took up their errors in common talk and pronunciation as well as in other matters; and had it not been for their obtaining a written language through the Church-of-England Missionaries, and also had books printed in correct Maori by them, the Maori language would have soon become irretrievably lost;—even as it is at present the loss is very great among themselves, more than most Maori scholars are aware, and it is daily becoming more contracted and corrupt (Colenso, 1882, 21).*

This summary may have been partially overstated, but the general sentiment was a fair reflection of the changes to te reo Māori that were occurring in the colonial period. The process of standardisation was still far from complete at this time, but it was certainly in train (Tomalin, 2006; Maunsell, 1842; Hastings, 1997; Howard, 205; Pybus, 1954; Biggs, 1972; Watkins, 1841; Harlow, 1985).



## Early orthographic limitations

The vast majority of Europeans involved in early attempts at converting te reo Māori into a written form lacked any formal training or experience in this area (Rogers, 1961). In 1817, an English visitor to New Zealand observed that 'the Missionaries would not only differ from each other in the spelling of the same words, but likewise in the pronunciation of them; a circumstance which must always happen when a new language is to be learned with no other standard of instruction than the ear' (Nicholas, 1817, 324; Pouwhare, 2015). By the late 1820s, however, the variations in spelling had narrowed considerably as the importance of a uniform orthography grew among those involved in publishing works in te reo Māori. However, the process was still far from complete. Lawrence Rogers, the editor of Henry Williams' early journals, explained this uneven trend towards greater uniformity, citing Grammar published by the missionary Robert Maunsell in 1842:

*By 1827 more, of the difficulties had been solved. The phonetic symbol d had been dropped as an initial consonant, although it was still used medially. There were indeed two sounds represented by r, but d as a symbol did not represent the difference. In Henry Williams's journal there is evidence of the development of the conviction that r was the best symbol. For example, at first he spells Kedi kedi, later it becomes Keri Kedi, and later still Keri Keri; at first he spells Waikadi, and later it becomes Waikari. He never uses the wh symbol, but uses w in all cases, e. g., wakawa for whakawa; wakaaro for whakaaro. There was, in fact, some considerable discussion over the use of the symbol wh, and finality did not come until much later. Maunsell, in his Grammar of the New Zealand Language, published in 1842, treats wh as merely a variant of w, "which has two sounds, one simple, as that in wind, &c; wai, water, waka, a canoe, ware, a plebeian. 2. An aspirated w, as in when, where, &c.: whai, follow, whare, a house, &c." (Rogers, 1961, 482).*

In 1834, the English artist and traveller, Edward Markham, recorded in his journal how he 'trotted on Thirty Miles to the Mission Station of Kiddy Kiddy, but the Missionaries in their writings exclude the "D" from their Language because the Letter 'R' will answer as well in some Districts as Kirri Kirri, and Wirri Nacky [Whirinaki] instead of Widdy Nacky thus making the Language poorer instead of enriching it' (Markham, 1963, 62). Markham failed to consider, though, the possibility that he had misheard some of the words that he was transcribing. And in the absence of a consensus on the orthography of te reo

Māori among Europeans at this time, such differences in opinion were bound to emerge. The need for greater consistency in the written form of te reo Māori was becoming a more concerning issue for the CMS by the 1830s – so much so that the editors of their annual reports by this decade were beginning to include explanatory notes about some of the differences which were emerging in the language in its printed form:

*a very material change has been made in the Spelling [of te reo Māori]. The old Orthography has hitherto been followed in the Publications of the Society, while the new one is employed by the Missionaries. As that used by them appears to be now, in a considerable degree, settled, it has been judged advisable to introduce it into print. The difference, however, between the two forms of Spelling is so great, that it has been found requisite to insert the following Vocabulary of the terms most frequently occurring in the communications of the Missionaries, to enable our Readers to recognise those heretofore employed under the form in which they now appear (Church Missionary Society, 1831, 21).*

In 1831, the editors of the *The Church Missionary Record* included in their annual report a revised vocabulary of certain words in te reo Māori which had been appearing in print for more than a decade by this stage, but that were now being given what approximated a definitive form of spelling. The following table lists some of these examples.

<b>Old Spelling</b>	<b>New Spelling</b>
Ahoodoo-Pa (sepulchre)	U'dupa
Amoko (the tattooing)	Moko
Areekee (priest)	Ariki
Hippah (fortification)	E Pa
Koko (a tool)	Koko
Koomeras (sweet potatoes)	Kumara
Taboo (to make sacred)	Tapu
Whydua (spirit)	Waidua

*Table 1. Changes to the spelling of some words in te reo Māori as recommended in The Church Missionary Record, 1831 (Church Missionary Society, 1831, 22).*

The final form of the language's orthography was still more than a century away, but such developments in the 1830s represented a substantial consolidation in the spelling of te reo Māori. There are a few specific trends that appear in this transition phase. Firstly, vowel sounds were shifting from double letters, such as 'oo' and 'ee', to

single vowels, such as 'o' and 'i' respectively. Secondly, as in the case of 'koomeras', the English-inflected plural 's' was removed. And thirdly, the prominence given to the 'd' consonant remained, with words such as 'U'dupa' (now 'urupā'), and 'Waidua' (now 'wairua') yet to reflect how these words were pronounced by Māori (in with the 'r' was replaced with 'd').

## No 's' in te reo Māori?

One of the more consistent and widespread alterations that had occurred in the orthography of te reo Māori by the 1840s was the near complete disappearance of the 's' sound in written forms of the language (with the exception of its use to designate plural forms of nouns, or to show possession). In particular, the sibilant (a voiceless palato-alveolar sibilant), 'sh', which appeared commonly in the published works of Europeans who had visited the Bay of Islands in the 1810s and 1820s, all but vanished from printed forms of te reo Māori. One recent explanation for this is that Ngāpuhi, the dominant tribe in the area, 'simply did not differentiate between SH and H....But H and SH sounds did sound different to Kendall, so he wrote them down as he heard them' (Paterson, 2014). A similar point on the prevalence of 'sh' in some words in te reo Māori was made by the trader Joel Polack in 1838, who suggested that '[t]he auricular organs of the English visitors, generally speaking, appears to have been rather obtuse, while the French apparently had no such difficulties' (Polack, 1838, 280). The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the common appearance of 'sh' in various European attempts at transcribing certain words from the Ngāpuhi dialect was chiefly the result of these writers' inability to distinguish certain sounds they heard from speakers of te reo Māori. However, such an explanation, while likely to carry some truth, is not sufficient in itself to account for the frequency with which this specific orthographical feature appeared in so many books, journals, and correspondence from this period.

It could also be possible that if Kendall was the principal source of this error of including words in te reo Māori with the 'sh' sound, then other Europeans who put the language to paper simply repeated this orthographical convention. The flaw with such a conclusion, though, is that it would also have resulted in those other writers similarly

reproducing all the other distinct spellings which Kendall had devised. However, the contrary is likely to be true. There is substantial variation in spelling among those writers who attempted to transcribe certain words that they heard in te reo Māori, although the 'sh' sound appears fairly consistently in their works. Even a brief survey of many of the published works about New Zealand in this period from those who had visited the country and heard te reo Māori spoken by Māori in parts of Northland at least reveals the near ubiquity of the use of the 'sh' sound in certain words. It is one of the sounds heard most consistently by Europeans who transcribed words that they heard in te reo Māori.

The artist Augustus Earle, for example, titled a watercolour he painted in Northland in the late 1820s, 'The residence of Shulitea chief of Kororadika, Bay of Islands, New Zealand' (Earle, 1829). Shulitea was Te Whareumu, who sometimes styled himself as 'King George' (Earle, 1832, 53). Not only was this spelling not used by Kendall for Te Whareumu, but there is no evidence that Earle was familiar with Kendall's works in Te Reo, so it is not as though the artist was conforming to some sort of spelling convention laid down by the missionary translators. Instead, 'Shulitea' was his effort to transcribe a word that he heard directly from a native speaker of te reo Māori, and without the reliance on a dictionary or any other printed source as a point of reference for spelling. Earle also used the 'sh' sibilant for Hongi (Shunghie) (Earle, 1832, 62), which was similar-sounding (although importantly, differently spelt) to 'Shunghee', as written by the missionary Samuel Marsden (Marsden to Pratt, 1820) and Kendall (Kendall to Pratt, 1820); while another missionary, John Butler (Barton, 1927) spelt Hongi the same way as Earle (Shunghie), although he additionally spelt it Shungee on occasion (Barton, 1927 395), which is with the Earle example, shows that these writers were not dependent on an existing written source for their spelling. James Shepherd, another missionary, wrote the great chief's name as 'Shone' (Shepherd to Marsden). Other variants that Europeans in this era made when transcribing sounds they heard the chief's name included Shunghee, Shungi, and 'Shongi' (McNab, 1908, 482, 602). This last example has perhaps slightly more significance in that it was the way the name was spelt by Eruera Pare Hongi, who was a nephew of Hongi Hika (Piripi, 2011), and one of the first Māori known to have written a letter in Te Reo (Hongi, 1825). In this instance, it is possible that this spelling

was the consequence how Eruera Pare Hongi was taught to spell by his missionary teachers, but the ubiquity of 'sh' in written sources in this era cannot be attributed to this cause for all the writers mentioned above.

In addition, it would be tenuous to claim that the consistent use of the 'sh' sound by numerous Europeans when transcribing certain words that they heard in te reo Māori was somehow attributable to some form of mass mis-hearing. For such a proposition to have some merit, it would require several European visitors to New Zealand, over a period of more than a decade, most of whom had no contact with each other, who came from different backgrounds throughout Britain, and who were unfamiliar with the emergent missionary orthography of the period, to hear those words in te reo Māori which included a 's'/'sh' sound in a consistently mistaken way, and yet at the same time, betray no similar problems with hearing and transcribing any other words in te reo Māori.

Another dimension of the use of the 'sh' sound among Māori in some parts of Northland in the early decades of the nineteenth century is that it was not confined solely to a few words. There seems to be a general pattern that proper nouns that were later written and pronounced as though they began with an 'h' actually were pronounced with an 'sh'. Words such as 'Shukianga' for Hokianga (Butler (Barton, 1927, 103)) and Alexander McCrae (McCrae, 1928) used this form) and the variant Shukeangha (which was used by Marsden) (Elder, 1932), give some indication both of the variation of words commencing with 'sh', and to a lesser extent, its geographical spread. 'Hoshee', was used for Oihi (by Marsden) (Elder, 1932, 124) and 'Shoroe' for Horoia (used by Kendall) (Kendall to Pratt, 1814). Lee, in the preface to the 1820 *A Grammar and Vocabulary*, offered this explanation for the appearance of 'sh':

*There is one peculiarity in the pronunciation of the New Zealand language which should here be noticed, and which could not be marked in the Alphabet. When two vowels concur, the combined sound becomes that of the English sh; ex. gr. E ongi, a salute, is pronounced Shongi, and so of every combination, in which the indefinite article e precedes a vowel (Lee & Kendall, 1820, ii).*

Maunsell, in his *Grammar of the New Zealand Language*, explained that the letter 'h' in te reo Māori was pronounced the same as in English, but added that '[a] gentle

sibilancy accompanies its pronunciation amongst Ngāpuhi, which some speakers erroneously confound with *sh*' (Maunsell, 1842, 7). This represents something of a middling stance: the 'sh' is not as harshly pronounced as in English, but neither is it silent, despite the fact that this was how it was subsequently represented in print, with such nouns later written as beginning with 'h'.

## Conclusion

It is fairly certain, then, that the 'sh' sound that appeared in texts between the 1820s and the 1840s in particular was a reflection of this affricated sound that was pronounced by Māori in parts of Northland at this time (Mutu, 2015). Even in the early twentieth century, the 's' sound persisted in some dialects, albeit predominately in loan words ('Ishu Karaiti' was spoken by some members of *Ngāti Hine* in church services, rather than commonly used Ihu Karaiti for 'Jesus Christ') (Henare, 2015). It is also evident, if the orthography of printed te reo Māori is anything to go by, that by the mid-nineteenth century, the 'sh' ceased to be used widely.

In addition, it seems clear that the 'sh' sound quickly faded from use from the early twentieth century in spoken te reo Māori (Kelly, 2015; Howard, 2015) – something that was preceded by, and perhaps to some extent facilitated by the standardisation of the language in print (Hadebe, 2002; Ansre, 1974; England, 1995; King, 2000). The editor of Henry Williams' early journals concluded that '[t]he C. M. S. missionaries soon discovered that the ['sh'] sound was not a sibilant, and made various attempts to capture it in an adequate symbol. Hence it appears, first as, e. g., *E'Okiana*, later as *Hokiana*, and finally as *Hokiana*'. This process bears the classic hallmarks of linguistic standardisation occurring in parts of Northland. The dialectical variation of Te Reo was clearly being curtailed in print, but it is also possible that this insistence on uniformity had its effect on various Māori communities, resulting in a similar reduction of dialectical variation in spoken te reo Māori (Rogers, 1961).

There were bound to be transitory stages in the process of bringing greater orthographic consistency to written te reo Māori, and the use of an apostrophe before an initial 'h' (as in 'Hongi, and 'Hokiana) (Coleman, 1865; Rogers, 1961), and less often

before a medial 'h' (as in ha'hunga) (Rogers, 1961) was a case of this. One explanation for the appearance of apostrophes in these words were that they were 'a symbol of a variant of the Ngāpuhi dialect', and that they represented 'a very similar sound to the *shewa* in the Hebrew language, which in English transliteration can be seen in the word *qetal*, where the vowel *e* is very, very short and the accent is on the last syllable. So the Māori sound can be represented by *Whongi* for the normal *Hongi*' (Rogers, 1961). By the close of the century, however, 'sh' had slipped from almost all contemporary printed Māori texts, and from spoken te reo Māori as well. Whether the former development led to the latter cannot be known for certain, but nonetheless, it cannot be discounted as a possible influence in the language's evolution over the century (Moon, 2016).

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