From Mount Cook *to* Aoraki.*?*
A Diachronic Analysis of Mountain Names and Naming Practices in the New Zealand Alpine Journal

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1. Introduction

Mountaineering is becoming more and more popular,[1] with a side effect of this increasing popularity being an increasing awareness of mountain names and mountain naming practices. As Drummond (2016: 115) notes, "the human activity of climbing mountains simply for pleasure has led to a greater focus on their names, with in some cases new names being coined, either to replace an older extant name, or to fill a gap where no name existed". One of the major onomastic developments in various postcolonial countries that were formerly part of the British Empire is the return from colonial to indigenous mountain names or 'oronyms'. While for some peaks such as *Denali / Mount McKinley*,[2] the use of the indigenous name appears to have become common practice, the situation may be different for less well-known mountains. Thus far, however, empirical evidence illustrating naming practices in the mountaineering community seems to be missing. An important aspect regarding how mountains are referred to is how established climbing clubs address and incorporate changes in mountain naming practices and, of course, the extent to which the Anglophone climbing community is willing to accept and implement such changes. While there may not be an issue with respecting a mountain's indigenous name, colonial oronyms tend to be associated with Western climbing efforts and history and, accordingly, may carry significant ideological weight (see Fill 2007 for a discussion of ideology in relation to place names). Importantly, as Taylor (2016: 71–72) points out, "[p]lace-names are more than simply inert linguistic items, the end-product of decades, centuries, even millennia of development. They are constantly evolving, reflecting our changing relationship

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1   Various articles provide evidence to support this observation at least for the Anglophone world and for various types of climbing. See, for instance, https://www.forbes.com/sites/rogersands/2022/05/09/alpine-trekking-continues-its-steep-climb-in-popularity/, https://www.thebmc.co.uk/participation-in-climbing-mountaineering, and https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/rock-climbing-is-more-popular-than-ever-is-that-a-good-thing.

2   In this study, I refer to mountains using a combination of *indigenous name/colonial name* unless the focus is on a corpus mention that diverges from this pattern.

with and perceptions of an ever-changing world". This implies that references to mountain names may not change instantaneously but, instead, gradually and over time – and depending on individual perspectives on mountain naming practices.[3] This study intends to provide the first systematic overview of how an important climbing journal, the *New Zealand Alpine Journal* (NZAJ), has reacted to the reclamation of indigenous oronyms both by referring to mountains and by discussing mountain naming practices. While several mountains would prove interesting, the focus is on New Zealand's highest mountain, *Aoraki/Mount Cook*, and North America's highest mountain, *Denali/Mount McKinley*, located in Alaska. In this study, a corpus-linguistic investigation is carried out with a focus on the following two research questions:

(1)   How have references to *Aoraki/Mount Cook* and *Denali/Mount McKinley* in the NZAJ developed over time?

(2)   How does the NAZJ address naming practices explicitly, specifically with regard to the use of indigenous vs. colonial names?

In order to set the stage, Section 2 introduces oronymy and the history of naming mountains, paying particular attention to how oronyms are motivated, and Section 3 briefly introduces the role of toponyms in the context of colonialism as well as shifts between indigenous and colonial oronyms. Section 4 gives an overview of the NZAJ corpus and the applied methods. Section 5 presents the results of the study before Section 6 discusses these results and offers a conclusion.

2. The Structure and Semantics of Oronyms

In onomastics, "hill and mountain names" (Drummond 2016: 115) are referred to as 'oronyms'. Several accounts of placenames across different parts of the Anglophone world have also considered how mountains received their names. In his study of Scottish hill and mountain names, Drummond (1991), for instance, identifies bodily analogy, flora and fauna, and people and professions as the main inspirations in naming mountains. Scottish oronyms also reflect historical multilingualism in the region, with Brittonic, Norse, Scots, and Gaelic all appearing in mountain names. In his study of Native American placenames in the Southwes-

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3   It is worth noting that climbing routes have also been discussed controversially; see, for instance, an article by Dobner (2019).

tern US, Bright (2013), in turn, also provides an overview of motivations behind placenames. According to him, placenames may be based on geographical features, events and myths, people who lived at a certain place, or other important people who do not have a specific connection to a place; in addition, "[i]n areas with a history of invasion or colonialism, one often finds that old names given by the original inhabitants survive in the usage of the newcomers, who simply adopted the existing name rather than make up a new one" (Bright 2013: xi). Finally, place names may also be 'transfer names', such as *New York* after *York*.[4]

Focusing on the structure of toponyms, Tent (2016: 148) points out that "place-names in their archetypal form consist of two elements: a specific followed by a generic", with *Torres Strait* representing a typical example. There are, however, also examples that do not follow this pattern. According to Tent (2016: 148), "[t] these, in English at least, include capes, lakes, mounts, and points". In contrast to more archetypal placenames, mounts, for instance, typically follow a *"Generic" X* structure with antecedent generics, as, for instance, *Mount Kosciuszko*. In his dataset comprised of the Gazetteer of Australia and the New Zealand Gazetteer, Tent (2016: 152) finds that 98 % of all mounts follow the *"Generic" X* structure and only 2 % follow the otherwise more common *X "Generic"* structure (e.g., *Bamboo Mount*). In a similar fashion to Drummond (1991) and Bright (2013), Tent (2016: 149) also considers how English-language toponyms emerge. According to him, toponyms may be descriptive or non-descriptive.[5] Descriptive toponyms may be based on characteristics (e.g., *Cape Manifold*) or evaluations (e.g., *Mount Awkward*) of a geographical feature, while non-descriptive toponyms tend to be eponymous (e.g., *Lake Eyre*) or indicate a name shift from another toponym (e.g., *Cape Frederick Hendrick* from *Frederick Hendrick Bay*) (Tent 2016: 149). The two mountains in focus, *Aoraki / Mount Cook* and *Denali / Mount McKinley*, both follow the significantly more frequent *"Generic" X* structure in their colonial names and are eponymous. More details on their naming histories are provided in Sections 5.1 and 5.2.

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4   Another study considering motivations for naming mountains and climbing routes is Rutkowski (2000), who focuses on the Polish climbing community.

5   See also Posch and Rampl (2015) on the difficulty of assessing the motives behind naming climbing routes.

3. Toponyms and Colonialism

As stated earlier, the main objective of this study is to investigate how naming practices in the NZAJ have changed over time and how they are discussed in the journal. An investigation of this kind is only possible because, frequently, toponyms in postcolonial contexts are allonyms, i.e., they have at least two names: an indigenous one and a colonial one. In countries colonised by the British Empire (but certainly also others), toponyms play a major role especially in the early stages of a colony. As Schneider (2007: 36) notes,

> It is a sad and surprising story which has repeated itself several times in history, however: even if indigenous peoples are violently subdued, frequently facing marginalization and isolation, cultural extinction, or even genocide, and leave hardly any other linguistic traces in the language of their conquerors, names which they gave to places in their natural environment tend to be adopted, linguistically adapted (sometimes reshaped by folk etymology) and retained.

Schneider (2007: 36) proposes as the main reason for this development that "anybody who is new to a region will ask for names of places and landmarks and accept them as naturally true, as the names which these localities simply 'have'". Another explanation offered by Sandnes (2016: 540) is that "names function as labels for places which can be singled out by pointing at them, meaning that only a minimum of communication is needed" (see also Thomason and Kaufman 1988: 77, who point out that casual contact is sufficient for exchanging names). As obvious peaks in a landscape, mountains certainly represent significant landmarks acting as major tools in orientation, which means that either borrowing a name that is already present or finding a new one rather quickly represent sensible linguistic strategies. Linguistically, borrowed names may undergo "adaptation […] on all linguistic levels" (Sandnes 2016: 552–553), with a speaker's role and the speaker interpretation of a name affecting the linguistic outcome of a toponymic borrowing. For the colonial context, Tent (2016: 152) summarises that "[t]he indigenous toponyms or descriptors were adopted by the colonizers in labeling the new landscape they encountered, usually not being cognizant of the literal meanings of these names or terms".

Many of the world's most well-known mountains, including Mt. Everest, are often referred to by their English-language name – which tends to represent a name given during a country's colonial occupation. While not all mountains necessarily have an indigenous name, for instance due to remaining undiscovered for a long time, many do, and efforts appear to be made to return to their in-

digenous names. How a place is referred to, however, may also differ depending on who is talking about it. As Bright (2013: x; bold print in original) notes for the context of the American Southwest,

> Of course many Native American placenames in the Southwest are used only among speakers of Native languages, not by the general public, and do not appear on maps and road signs. An example is Comanche **Piaroya** (literally 'big mountain'), which is called Mount Scott in English. No attempt has been made to list these, because travelers are unlikely to encounter them.

In a sense, as Barnd (2017: 1) points out, "[i]ndigenous geographies have quietly overlapped and coexisted in tension with the geographies of the settler colonial state. They have been submerged, but not eliminated". Of course, how exactly colonisers dealt with indigenous names differed greatly between different countries and certainly also between individual areas and depending on the situation.

A general development that can be observed in recent times is an active rethinking of how indigenous names – and the places they belong to – should be dealt with. A controversial example of this development are 'land acknowledgments', defined as "the practice of prefacing a presentation or event with a recognition of the Indigenous people or peoples whose land one occupies" (Wark 2021: 193). Some reasons as to why land acknowledgments may be seen as problematic are discussed by Wark (2021) and Stewart-Ambo and Yang (2021) but go beyond the scope of this paper. They are, however, certainly indicative of a larger tendency observable in several postcolonial countries to pay respect to indigenous populations and their cultures. In mountaineering, both route names and mountains overall may be reverted to their indigenous names. As Pullan (2021) points out in a news article, "[t]he renaming of mountains is a more complicated process than changing route names because it has to go through official channels". Route names tend to be unofficial, even though certain routes may be popular and widely used. As Stehfest and Aehnlich (2016) point out, using one name or another for a referent may express a wide range of emotions, such as respect or disrespect, and have varying consequences, such as increasing or decreasing distance between interactants or even communities. While awareness about the implications of selecting one name over another certainly differs between individuals, it is important to acknowledge that choices of this kind are typically not irrelevant or inconsequential.

As this brief section has shown, many geographical features in postcolonial countries carry significant importance for both the indigenous and the settler populations. Navigating the toponyms used to refer to them represents a challenge,

since ideologies are attached to them and bureaucratic processes may slow down any desired changes. This is why empirical investigations are important to shed light on current practices and how changes are discussed and eventually adopted (or not).

4. Data and Method

This study uses a corpus-based approach to investigate mountain names and naming practices in the NZAJ, which was first published in 1892 and, after a hiatus from 1896 to 1920, has regularly released new issues up to the present day. The NZAJ corpus was compiled by Posch and Rampl (2020, 2021) and contains 5,197 texts amounting to roughly eight million words (Posch 2023: 244). The NZAJ features texts on various topics, including "reports on first ascents, descriptions of routes, scientific articles from geology, geography, surveying, biology, history, environmental management" (NZAC 2023).

To be able to compare the usage of indigenous vs. colonial names in the corpus over time, I first identified relevant spellings and naming variants of *Aoraki/Mount Cook* and *Denali/Mount McKinley* using the digital tools provided by the New Zealand Gazetteer and the United States Geological Survey.[6] Alternatives to be included for *Aoraki/Mount Cook* are, for instance, *Aorangi* as well as *Mt Cook* and *Mt. Cook*. After obtaining lists as comprehensive as possible with regard to spelling variants and alternative names, I looked for relevant tokens in the NZAJ corpus using *AntConc* (Anthony 2023). I then counted the tokens for the different naming options, which are (a) indigenous (e.g., *Aoraki*), (b) indigenous first (e.g., *Aoraki/Mount Cook*), (c) colonial (e.g., *Mount Cook*), and (d) colonial first (e.g., *Mount Cook/Aoraki*), and calculated the percentages for each option per decade before visualising the results using the ggplot2 (Wickham 2016) and viridis (Garnier et al. 2023) packages in R (R Core Team 2023).

For the qualitative analysis of mountain (re-)naming discussions, I looked for the expressions *name(s)*, *naming*, *renaming*, *indigenous*, and *colonial* in *AntConc* and read the concordance lines to identify relevant examples. Since the intention of this part is not to provide any quantification but, instead, to analyse if and how the NZAJ has addressed issues of mountain naming practices, some examples from different periods were selected for the analysis.

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6   See https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/ for the New Zealand Gazetteer and https://edits.nationalmap.gov/apps/gaz-domestic/public/search/names for the United States Geological Survey.

A major issue pertaining to the first component of the present study is that several significant peaks around the world are mentioned relatively rarely in the NZAJ corpus and, consequently, do not yield sufficient tokens to satisfyingly investigate naming developments. Examples include *Begguya/Mount Hunter* (USA; 1 token indigenous, 11 tokens colonial) and *Uluru/Ayers Rock* (Australia; 4 tokens indigenous, 1 token colonial), but this problem occurred for many other examples as well. Since the objective of this study is not to give a comprehensive analysis but, instead, to show diachronic trends, focusing on two frequently mentioned peaks from two different postcolonial countries as representatives of potentially changing naming practices was deemed sufficient.

5. Analysis

This section presents the results of the analysis. After a discussion of *Aoraki/Mount Cook* in Section 5.1 and *Denali/Mount McKinley* in Section 5.2, Section 5.3 considers explicit discussions of (re-)naming mountains in the NZAJ corpus. In order to provide some context on the two major mountains in focus, Sections 5.1 and 5.2 each begin with a brief summary of their properties and naming histories.

5.1 *Aoraki/Mount Cook* (South Island, New Zealand)

The first mountain under consideration is *Aoraki/Mount Cook*, which is located on New Zealand's South Island and, at an elevation of 3,724 metres, is the country's highest mountain. The Māori name is either *Aorangi* or *Aoraki*, with the former being preferred in the North and the latter representing the Ngāi Tahu dialect (see Tau 2017). As Tau (2017) explains,

> Aorangi was a person. According to tradition, when the canoe in which he and his brothers were voyaging in the south-west Pacific was wrecked, he scrambled to the highest point of the canoe's upturned hull. One early name for the South Island is Te Waka o Aoraki (Aoraki's canoe). (Tau 2017)

While there were early sightings by Westerners, the mountain only received its additional name in 1851 by Captain John Lort Stokes, who decided to name the mountain after James Cook (see NZGB 2024). In the New Zealand Gazetteer and official records of the mountain, referencing it by both its indigenous and colonial name, with the indigenous name shown first, appears to be common practice.

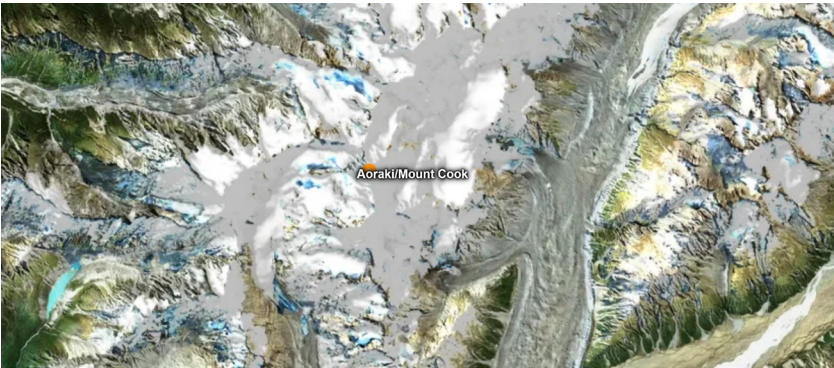Fig. 1 shows how *Aoraki/Mount Cook* is presented in the New Zealand Gazetteer's interactive digital map.

Fig. 1: *Aoraki/Mount Cook* in the New Zealand Gazetteer (screenshot published under CC-BY-4.0 licence, map available at https://gazetteer.linz.govt.nz/place/7297)

In the NZAJ corpus, 1,650 tokens referring to *Aoraki/Mount Cook* in some way could be identified. Fig. 2 depicts the naming strategies for the mountain from the first issues of the NZAJ in the 1890s to the most recent issues featured in the corpus.
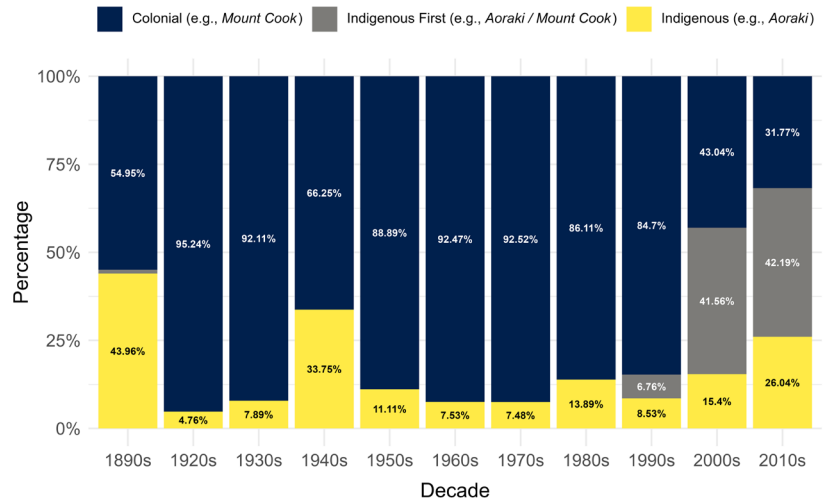

Fig. 2: Use of colonial names vs. indigenous names for *Aoraki/Mount Cook* in the NZAJ corpus

The figure shows multiple interesting changes in how *Aoraki / Mount Cook* is referred to in the NZAJ corpus. Perhaps in contrast to what one might expect, almost 50 % of references to the mountain in the 1890s use the indigenous name. In the 1920s and 1930s, in turn, the indigenous name is used rarely at 4.76 % and 7.89 %, respectively. After an increase to 33.75 % in the 1940s, usage of the indigenous name remains low well into the 1990s, when the first instances of indigenous-first references of the type *Aoraki / Mount Cook* occur. The combination of both names quickly became the preferred option in the NZAJ, with 41.56 % of tokens in the 2000s and 42.19 % of tokens in the 2010s representing this type. Simultaneously, exclusively colonial references decrease in frequency; the lowest percentage of this type occurs in the 2010s at 31.77 %. In contrast to *Denali / Mount McKinley*, however, the colonial name does not fall out of use – it remains commonly used together with *Aoraki* or, in slightly less than a third of cases, on its own. Overall, there is a clear trend towards at least including the indigenous name for the mountain in the NZAJ.

An aspect that is not shown in the figure but can be seen by investigating the tokens is that the NZAJ shifts from mostly using *Aorangi* as the indigenous name to mostly using *Aoraki*. In the 1890s, all indigenous tokens are represented by *Aorangi*; by contrast, in the 2010s, only 3.05 % (n=4) of tokens are represented by *Aorangi* and the remaining 96.95 % (n=127) by *Aoraki*. A potential explanation for the shift from *Aorangi* to *Aoraki* may be that, as mentioned above, *Aoraki* is the name's variant in the Ngāi Tahu dialect of Māori, which is historically associated with New Zealand's South Island (see White and Rewi 2014: 215) where the mountain is also located.

5.2 *Denali / Mount McKinley* (Alaska, USA)

The next mountain under consideration is *Denali / Mount McKinley*, which, at 6,190 meters, is the mountain with the highest elevation in North America (National Geographic Society 2023) and, accordingly, one of the Seven Summits (i. e., the seven highest mountains by continent). As the following quote from the National Park Service (2024) illustrates, there has been controversy over *Denali / Mount McKinley*'s name for a long time:

> On the eve of the National Park Service's 100th anniversary in 2016, the name of the highest peak in North America changed from "Mount McKinley" to "Denali." The timing of the change not only helped mark the agency's centennial, it shines a

light on the long human history of the park, and illuminates a naming debate that
has lasted more than 100 years.

As a report issued by the US Senate points out, "Denali is the Alaskan Native
name for Mount McKinley, meaning 'the high one'" (U.S. Government Publishing
Office 2013), with the Koyukon Athabaskans being the first people with access to
the mountain. During Russia's control over Alaska, *Denali / Mount McKinley* was
called *Bulshaia Gora*. After the American purchase of Alaska in 1867, the gold
prospector William Dickey named the peak *Mount McKinley* after William
McKinley, the 25th president of the United States (see National Park Service
2024). The naming debate is also part of public signage in the Denali National
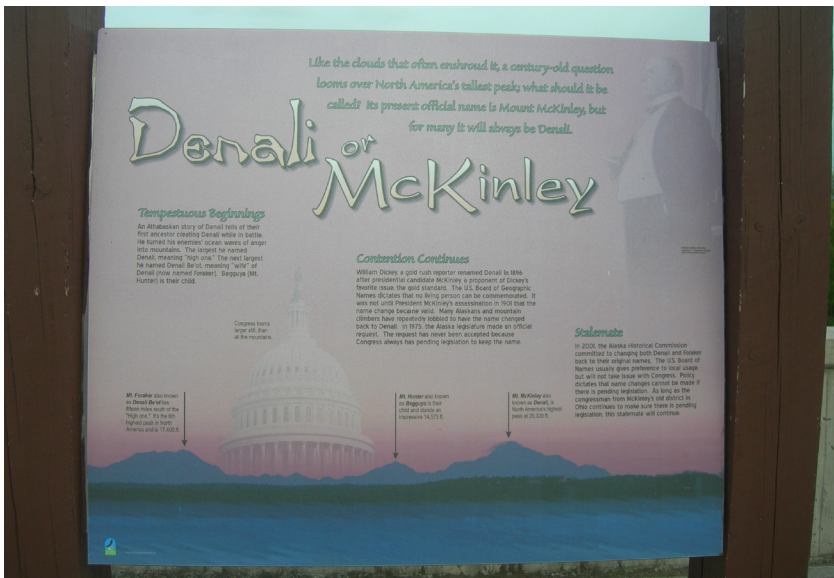Park, as illustrated in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3: Public signage covering the *Denali / Mount McKinley* naming debate in
Denali National Park, Alaska (photograph by Jimmy Emerson, published under
CC-BY-NC-ND 2.0 licence, original photograph available at
https://www.flickr.com/photos/auvet/7600303898)

In addition to the more common names, a variety of spelling variants and other
proposed names exist for *Denali / Mount McKinley*. Examples include *Deenadheet*,

Mount Doleika, *South Peak*, *Tenda*, and many others (see USGS 2024 for further examples and some etymological details).

In the NZAJ corpus, 220 tokens referencing *Denali / Mount McKinley* in some way could be found. Fig. 4 shows the distribution of colonial, colonial-first, indigenous-first, and indigenous names for *Denali / Mount McKinley* in the corpus. The comparison begins later than for *Aoraki / Mount Cook* since the first tokens mentioning the mountain show up only in the 1950s.
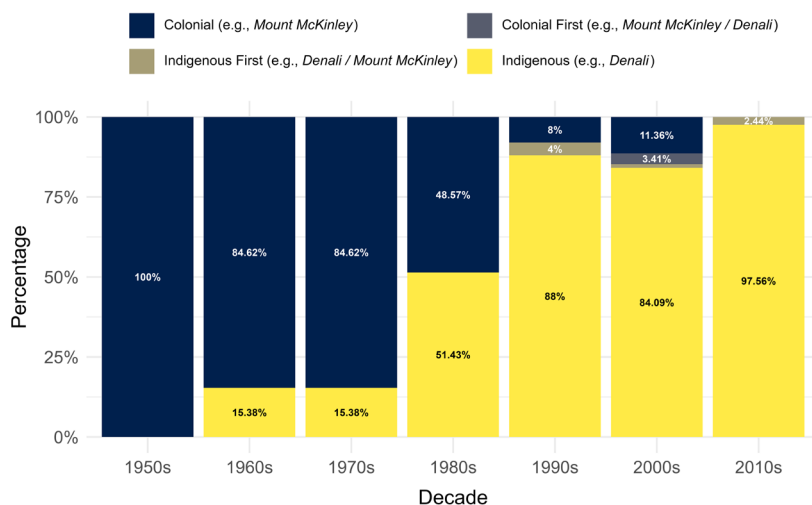

Fig. 4: Use of colonial names vs. indigenous names for *Denali / Mount McKinley* in the NZAJ corpus

Several aspects stand out in the figure. In a similar fashion to *Aoraki / Mount Cook*, the colonial name was most popular in the NZAJ from the 1950s until the end of the 1970s, with the 1950s containing exclusively colonial references to the mountain. The shift to the indigenous name is much more drastic for *Denali / Mount McKinley*, however, with more than half of all tokens representing the indigenous name in the 1980s and almost 90 % of tokens doing so in the 1990s. While the indigenous-first option also sees some use in the NZAJ in the 1990s and the 2010s, it is much less frequent compared to *Aoraki / Mount Cook*. The colonial-first option occurs rarely in the 2000s but never represents a popular choice in the journal. As Fig. 4 clearly shows, *Denali / Mount McKinley* is exclusively referred to by its indigenous name or, rarely, by the indigenous-first combination in the

2010s, indicating an almost complete shift to its Native American name in the NZAJ.

5.3 (Re-)Naming Discussions in the NZAJ Corpus

In addition to assessing how mountains are referred to in practice, it is also relevant to consider how authors in the NZAJ discuss naming practices at the metalinguistic level. Investigating examples in which naming practices are discussed has revealed several different ways in which contributors to the NZAJ do so. The stories of how mountains have received their names may be part of reports, such as in examples (1) from 1942, (2) from 1985, and (3) from 2002.

> (1) The Maori names of the district are frequently suspect as to their antiquity, since the Maoris, at the time of the arrival of the whites in 1850, were strictly confined to the Coast, and knew nothing of the back country. The names, moreover, are usually descriptions of features, or straight translations of English names, as for example:— Cook—Aorangi: Cloud of Heaven; Maunga Ma: White Mountain; Sefton—Maunga Atua: Mountain of the Gods; The Eyes (Glacier)—Ngakamohi: the Eyes; The Tears (waterfall)—Ngaroimata: The Tears; Stocking (Glacier)—Te Waewae: the Leg. Even if these names were obtained from Maoris by English questioners, it is well-known that the Maoris were very obliging in giving some kind of an answer to a persistent question. (NZAJ:1942_9_29.xml)

> (2) Aoraki itself was named Mt Cook by Captain J. L. Stokes of the survey ship Acheron. Probably unaware of its lovely Maori name, Stokes renamed this "stupendous moutain", seen from the sea to the west in 1851, in honour of Captain James Cook, rediscoverer of New Zealand in 1769. (NZAJ:1985_38.xml)

> (3) A tatty collection of posters lined the walls: Alaska—where men are men and women win the Iditarod (the 1600 kilometre Anchorage-Nome dog sledge race won three times by Susan Butcher in the 1980s) and McKinley never saw Denali, referring to the renaming of Denali as Mount McKinley in 1896 after a US politician and later president who never came to Alaska. (NZAJ:2002_54.xml)

The three quotes show that, in its past, the NZAJ has reported on the histories of toponyms both from the perspectives of the Māori and the colonial settlers. In (2), two interesting aspects concern the description of the Māori name as "lovely" and the implication that giving the mountain a new, colonial name was, in a way, 'ac-

cidental' or done by necessity.[7] The example in (3) not only concisely summarises how *Denali* received its additional colonial name, but also the fascinating aspect that McKinley had little to do with the mountain or how it received its name. While the naming conflict may not be the focus of the contribution, it is mentioned at least in some capacity.

Another relevant contribution from 1991, presented in example (4), describes the role of mountains for Māori both on the North and South Islands of New Zealand.

> (4) While Maori traditions tell of ascents of peaks such as Ngauruhoe and Taranaki and the Maori moved through the mountains in both islands, there was little purpose to them in ascending the heights above the bushline. They could travel for limited periods in snow but would have done so only for specific purposes, such as to cross from one side of the South Island to the other. By the time Europeans came to New Zealand many mountains accessible to the Maori seem to have become specifically tapu, particularly in the North Island, while prominent peaks in the South Island were known, named, but passed by. Mountains were significant to the Maori, but not for climbing. (NZAJ:1991_44.xml)

The word *tapu* in this example is the root of English *taboo*. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2024), it was "[i]n earliest use with reference to the cultural or religious customs of various islands of the Pacific, as Polynesia, Melanesia, New Zealand, etc., where certain things or people were prohibited to the general population because they were regarded as sacred, supernatural, or restricted to the use of a chief, priest, etc.". Thus, mountains may have been given a name, but they were not seen as places to climb, a view that is still maintained to this day for *Aoraki/Mount Cook* and other sacred mountains (see Department of Conservation 2024).

The example in (5) shows that discussions about reverting to Māori names for mountains date back at least as far as the 1940s.

> (5) About the time my book "With Axe and Rope in the New Zealand Alps" was published (1891) attempts were made to revert to the Maori name of Aorangi. I was one who hoped to see the Native name restored. My friend A. P. Harper, in publishing his book "Pioneer Work in the Alps of New Zealand" (1896) objected to what he termed an innovation, stating that so far as he could learn from West Coast Maoris of that time, they had no names for the separate peaks of the main range. Also that they had great fear of the mountains generally, and that it would be a pity to have the older names superseded by a Maori word which had only been applied

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7   I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this aspect.

to the peak during the present generation. (He did not quote any authority for the last statement). (NZAJ_1947_12_34.xml)

In this excerpt, George Edward Mannering voices his support for using Māori mountain names while criticising an opinion that is less enthusiastic about doing so.

Overall, the examples have shown that oronyms, in particular etymological aspects related to them, are a topic addressed in several issues of the NZAJ. Expressions such as *renamed* and *renaming* (n=35) are not extremely frequent in the corpus, but they do occur throughout the NZAJ's publication history. There seem to be, however, relatively few contributions in the corpus that explicitly address the idea of 'giving names back' to indigenous groups.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper set out to provide (1) a diachronic analysis of how *Aoraki/Mount Cook* and *Denali/Mount McKinley* are referred to in the NZAJ corpus and (2) an analysis of if and how mountain naming practices are discussed in the NZAJ. To this end, I carried out a corpus-linguistic analysis using the NZAJ corpus created by Posch and Rampl (2020, 2021).

The analysis has shown that for both *Aoraki/Mount Cook* and *Denali/Mount McKinley*, a transition from a dominant use of the colonial to the indigenous name has occurred. There are some noteworthy differences, however: While an indigenous-first option has become the most frequent variant in the NZAJ for *Aoraki/Mount Cook*, the journal has almost exclusively used the indigenous name for *Denali/Mount McKinley* in the 2010s. A potential reason for this difference might be that *Denali* has become the official name of the mountain, while the indigenous-first option is the official name of *Aoraki/Mount Cook*. While the NZAJ is, to the best of my knowledge, not required to use any specific name, it seems to adopt naming practices recommended by geographical boards tasked with (re-)naming mountains. With regard to the second question, I found that the NZAJ has repeatedly elaborated on the etymology of oronyms. Both indigenous and colonial names and their histories have been featured over the years and, overall, both appear to be treated equally respectfully. I could not, however, find many examples that explicitly take reverting to indigenous names into focus. This does not mean that they are not there at all, but they do not appear to represent a major concern for the journal.

One of the reasons for carrying out this type of study is that "[a]ny dominant form of space or spatiality stands as, and is, power, as it structures particular values about, views of, and practices within the world and reinforces these structures by shaping encounters to match that world" (Barnd 2017: 13). In other words, names also reflect views of the world and language ideologies, which is why name shifts in oronyms are worthy of closer investigation. As Fill (2007: 24) also points out, "nomination crystallizes ideas but also contributes to the creation of ideologies". In handling naming practices, geographical boards are tasked with balancing and respecting long-standing indigenous traditions on the one hand and Western achievements on mountains on the other hand, both of which represent important parts of a mountain's complex history. An important linguistic argument that can be made in favour of using indigenous names is that "salvaging the many small and endangered non-SAE languages together with their names for natural phenomena may contribute to preventing the extinction of numerous otherwise unnamed species and thus rescue some of the colorfulness of the planet" (Fill 2007: 25). Pullan (2021) reports on several climbers' opinions about route and mountain names that are in some way offensive, for instance by being sexist, and, for the debate on indigenous vs. colonial oronyms, concludes that "[t]here are a lot of reasons why we should change colonial mountain names, like Mount MacDonald, Mount Sir Donald, Mount Rundle, Mount Temple, back to their Indigenous names or to a non-colonial one". The voices presented in his article all seem to agree, but this is another aspect that demands further empirical attention. Just as mountaineering expressions may differ from region to region (see Leuckert 2024), it seems likely that attitudes towards reverting to indigenous names are not unanimous in the climbing community.

This study gave an overview of major developments in referring to *Aoraki/Mount Cook* and *Denali/Mount McKinley*, but there are, of course, many other mountains that could be investigated. Future studies could consider the treatment of other mountains in the NZAJ corpus and other resources dealing with mountains, and compare developments across alpine club journals. This would be interesting particularly if non-English club journals are included, such as some of the journals in the *Text+Berg* corpus by Bubenhofer et al. (2015) and the *Alpenwort* corpus by Posch and Rampl (2017). Discourses surrounding linguistic and social justice certainly differ between countries, which means that comparing club journals with regard to mountain names and naming practices could yield important findings. Another direction with some potential would be interviewing mountaineers and stakeholders in naming mountains to make current practices and concerns, but also practical issues in renaming processes more transparent. A caveat in the

present study is that attention was given neither to the text types the names appear in nor to the authors using any of the available names, which also has to remain future work as well. Methodologically, this study has hopefully shown that corpus-linguistic approaches may be useful in onomastic research, although there is still much more work that can – and probably should – be done in this direction (see Motschenbacher 2020).

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Acknowledgements

[*Abstract:* This article investigates how mountain naming practices have changed in the *New Zealand Alpine Journal* (NZAJ) from the late 19th century to the present day. More specifically, the study considers how the two mountains *Aoraki/Mount Cook* (New Zealand) and *Denali/Mount McKinley* (USA) have been referred to in the journal and how toponymic etymologies are discussed in contributions to the publication. Overall, the findings show that there is a clear tendency towards using a mountain's indigenous name more frequently the closer the journal moves towards the present. There are, however, some differences, with an 'indigenous-first' option being preferred for *Aoraki/Mount Cook* and the indigenous name *Denali* being preferred on its own for *Denali/Mount McKinley*. The etymologies of mountain names are discussed for both indigenous and colonial names in the NZAJ, but there is relatively little evidence of metalinguistic discussion about reverting back to indigenous names.]