

**Insular Toponymies: Pristine place-naming on
Norfolk Island, South Pacific and Dudley Peninsula,
Kangaroo Island, South Australia**

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ABSTRACT

Placenames or toponyms have traditionally been of interest to history and philology but not linguistics. In toponymy there is a deficit of theory and methods which consider a linguistic analysis of toponym structure in parallel with a detailed cultural analysis of the socio-historical significance of toponyms and processes of toponymy. Documenting patterns of pristine toponymy, or toponymic knowledge in locations where people remember the locations and histories of people and events associated with extant placenames, seems a worthwhile endeavour in linguistically pristine island environments, i.e. islands that were uninhabited prior to colonisation. Conducting an empirical pristine toponymic study in isolated, small island situations, that have witnessed recent human habitation, involves analysing convenient and confined parameters.

In order to test the utility of pristine toponymy as a conceptual tool to observe relationships between toponyms as linguistic and cultural artefacts and their connection to specific pristine socio-historical and natural island ecologies, this study used the toponymy of Norfolk Island, South Pacific as a main study and compared it to the toponymy of Dudley Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, South Australia. Applying linguistic and cultural levels of analysis, the official and unofficial toponymy of Norfolk Island was compared to the unofficial toponymy of Dudley Peninsula. The principal research question for the study sought to establish whether the difference between official and unofficial toponyms and processes of toponymy in the two island environments was a consequence of the degree of linguistic, cultural and ecological embeddedness of these toponyms and toponymic processes.

Norfolk Island (35 km²), 1700 kilometres east of Sydney, is an external territory of Australia. The linguistic situation on Norfolk is diglossic: English and Norf'k, the language of the descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers, are spoken. Both languages are present in the contemporary toponymic landscape on the island. Norfolk is a political and cultural anomaly in Australia and its anomalous nature is depicted in the unclear boundaries not only of its human history but also in the blurring of boundaries in its toponymic history as a result of distinct and changing patterns of land use and

differing linguistic and toponymic perceptions of the same geographical space. The presence of the Melanesian Mission on Norfolk Island from 1867 to 1920 and patterns of modern toponymy after the construction of the Norfolk Island airport in 1942 have had a marked effect on the history of Norfolk toponymy.

Dudley Peninsula (650 km²), the eastern peninsula on Kangaroo Island, is less remote and less politically and culturally anomalous than Norfolk. Dudley Peninsula was selected as an island comparative study to contrast principles of unofficial toponymy with unofficial Norfolk Island toponymy. Employing a comparative method also made it possible to ascertain the extent to which a nexus and theory of pristine toponyms, transparent versus opaque toponymic histories and the official versus unofficial status of toponyms is practical across two island toponymic case studies.

The study employed an ecolinguistic fieldwork methodology to gain large amounts of primary data. A taxonomy of four data sets was employed. These were topographical names, house names, road names and fishing ground names. The primary Norfolk data were coupled with secondary archival data (n = 1068) and analysed using general grammatical analyses, tagmemic analysis of Norfolk toponyms, spatial orientation analysis, analysis of official and unofficial toponyms and cultural analysis. The unofficial Dudley Peninsula data (n = 254) of topographical names and fishing ground names were analysed using general grammatical analysis and cultural analysis. A microtoponymic case study for each island situation was also presented and subsequently compared.

The results of this study revealed that the differences between official and unofficial toponyms can be accounted for by the establishment of a typology involving four toponym categories: (1) common colonial forms, (2) official and unofficial descriptive toponyms, (3) unofficial names commemorating local people, and (4) unofficial and esoteric names commemorating local events and people. While these categories appear mutually exclusive and distinct, the blurring of boundaries between the effectiveness of these categories was extensive in Norfolk Island toponymy. The linguistic structure of unofficial Dudley Peninsula toponyms, while still governed by their cultural and ecological placement and existence, did not exhibit the same degree of boundary blurring and esoteric and

insider identity compared to Norfolk Island toponyms. It was claimed these differences in the linguistic, socio-cultural and ecological history in the two island environments were due to there being more political pressures for the Norfolk Island population on Norfolk Island to express their cultural allegiances to England and Tahiti through toponymy rather than through any marked connection to Australia as compared to Dudley Peninsula's clear political and social connection to (South) Australia. The overall results suggested a broad continuum within and between 'conscious toponymic wisdom' and 'unconscious toponymic wisdom', which is realised differently in the two locations with a tendency for more 'conscious toponymic wisdom' within Norfolk Island's toponymic ethos as compared to Dudley Peninsula's more 'unconscious toponymic wisdom'. It was argued that ecolinguistic fieldwork, which makes informants aware of the importance of their intricate knowledge of their local toponymy, is a productive means to foreground the significance of local, unofficial and esoteric toponymic knowledge by working with informants.

In conclusion, this thesis argued that the concept of *insular toponymies*, i.e. undertaking an analysis of toponyms based predominantly in the documentation and analysis of primary toponymic field data, was appropriate to describe the nature of toponymy in isolated and insular island societies. As a part of documenting the history of the Norf'k language, the importance of Norf'k toponyms to language contact studies, the role of islands to toponymic theory and the application of toponymy to island studies, this study used the term *toponymic ethnography* as a worthwhile concept within the parameters of this research and is arguably of benefit for future toponymic and cultural analyses.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Signed:

Date: 10 June 2011

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