

## BOOK REVIEWS

Joshua Nash. (2013) *Insular toponymies. Place-naming on Norfolk Island, South Pacific and Dudley Peninsula, Kangaroo Island* [(Culture and Language Use. Studies in Anthropological Linguistics, 9)]. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. xiv + 302 pp., EUR 99.00 | USD 149.00.

Reviewed by Philip A. Clarke

In *Insular toponymies*, Nash identifies the core issues for toponym research on islands: How do people name places? Is this different to processes of toponymy on the mainland? And what are the cultural influences of people from neighbouring land masses? These are relevant questions for scholars from several divergent fields, particularly toponymy (place-naming research), linguistics, island studies and ethnography. The task of documenting the origin of placenames is not just of antiquarian historical interest, as the author describes how his toponym project has altered, or perhaps refined, islander perceptions of their own cultural heritage.

Nash chose two case study areas: Norfolk Island in the South-western Pacific and Dudley Peninsula of eastern Kangaroo Island in South Australia. These were well chosen, because they are relatively small in size and have a similar 'shallow history' of human occupation linked through their shared British maritime heritage. The relevant differences between them are in relation to their distance from other land masses (i.e. New Zealand versus mainland Australia), and involve the presence of people from specific non-European cultures (i.e. Melanesians and Polynesians versus Indigenous Tasmanians mainland and Aborigines). This comparative approach is an innovation with the study of pristine toponymy, although it has a resonance with island biogeography studies (MacArthur & Wilson 1967). The sources of data are eclectic, and include maps, written but unpublished records, published histories, as well as living people as placename knowledge holders. In the ethnographic tradition of participant observation, Nash took time to develop a rich variety of links with the social networks among the residents of both islands. In the case of the more remote Norfolk Island, it is difficult to see how he could have studied what is locally termed 'Norf'k language' without having developed close personal relationships with the speakers. Toponymic knowledge from culturally remote places is not normally accessible to outsiders.

The publication has eight chapters and two appendices spread over 302 pages. The first three chapters provide the historical and cultural background to the

islands, and outline the methodology Nash employed. The chapters from four to seven focus on the linguistic and cultural aspects of his research findings, while the final chapter 8 offers a summary and suggests pathways for future studies in toponymy. The rich data sets of placenames, both official (from colonial authorities) and unofficial, are provided as appendices that take up over half the number of pages in the book. Some of the material has already been published in other forms (Nash 2012, 2014; Nash & Mühlhäusler 2014), building upon the existing knowledge of Norf'k (see Mühlhäusler 2002, 2011, 2012) and its status among the pidgins and creoles spoken across the Pacific (Mühlhäusler 1986; Wurm, Mühlhäusler & Tyron 1996).

The subject matter has intellectual importance beyond the study of islander communities, as not all social isolation is due solely to the physical geography. For instance, my own geographical research (Clarke 1994) into the Aboriginal cultural landscape across the region within which Kangaroo Island sits demonstrated that communities of socially and culturally isolated peoples also exist on parts of the mainland. Closed Aboriginal communities on former mission reserves are effectively 'Islands', albeit surrounded by a rural landscape rather than a sea. When conducting ethnographic research, the study of toponyms becomes revealing of broader patterns of landuse, both past and present. In keeping with the strategy of working mainly with the elderly as caretakers of toponym knowledge, Nash became keenly aware of how the changing economic relationships that people have with the land and surrounding sea has led to members of younger generations not using or recognizing many of the old placenames. He therefore argues that there is need to record known toponyms and their origins while it is still possible.

Nash uses his understanding of toponyms to gain deeper linguistic and cultural insights into the people who know and use them. Some placenames have origins firmly rooted in the colonial past. For example, for Norfolk Island he lists the 'Rose Apple Grove' toponym as relating to a type of tree (*Syzygium jambos*) that is often found growing in places associated with past convict activities, and according to oral tradition the Pitcairn Islanders had originally brought it to the island in the form of seeds. Others toponyms on Norfolk Island are probably more recently formed and with external influences, such as the house named 'Pindari', which according to Nash, means 'house on the hill' in an unspecified Australian Aboriginal language. The author appears to be unaware that places on mainland Australia, ranging from dams to homes, have been given this name based on the basis of its presence as a word for 'high ground' in popular Aboriginal word lists (i.e. Cooper 1962). With sufficient time and energy, it would be possible to drill further into many of the toponyms listed by Nash. His findings could also be used to highlight the tensions over race, gender, and colonial identity on Norfolk Island.

In contrast to the separatist political situation on Norfolk Island, Nash's living sources of toponym data on Kangaroo Island saw themselves as part of the mainland, being a chapter of South Australian history with the distinction of early colonial involvements with sealers and their Indigenous female workforce. The placenames listed for Dudley Peninsula were chiefly gained from living sources during fieldwork in 2009, and among the listed topographic features are several examples from the colonial past, such as 'Nats Shed' named after early 19th century sealer Nathaniel Thomas, and 'Lubra Creek', which I suggest is associated with the Tasmanian women who remained on Kangaroo Island after official settlement in 1836 (Clarke 1998). If time had permitted Nash to do more archival research in South Australia, he would have undoubtedly come up with many more toponyms for Dudley Peninsula. For instance, it was recorded in a colonial newspaper in 1870 that there was a site on the island that local inhabitants referred to as 'the old black woman's potato-ground' (Anonymous, cited Clarke 1996). Whether this refers to a spot where yams were collected or to a place where potatoes were grown is not known, although it is recorded that the labour force on the island during the early 19th century was dominated by Indigenous women, who gathered wild foods (Clarke 1998). There are also local published histories, such as Nunn (1989), which could provide further examples of toponyms and more contextual material. Nash, nonetheless, has garnered sufficient data to make his arguments concerning the role of placename creation in the humanizing of space. In his words, '[t]he two island environments demonstrate the role of toponyms and identity creation in terms of creating a large world in a small (island) place' (p. 119).

The book is well written and adequately illustrated with color maps and photographs. This helps to present its findings and the associated data in an accessible form for those who are outside of the relatively small field of toponym studies. Beyond academic studies of linguistics and ethnography, the data presented will be of immense value in the future for those who are participating in official place-name processes. While many Australian studies (i.e. Hercus, Hodges & Simpson 2009) have focussed on indigenous toponymy relating to the hunting and gathering periods, Nash demonstrates the need for new approaches to method and theory in this field which encompass the knowledge of diverse cultural groups with close relationships to the same land.

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