

LINGUISTIC AND ETHNOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF PLACE-NAMING OF THE MELANESIAN MISSION, NORFOLK ISLAND

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This short paper provides a detailed linguistic and ethnographic analysis of data presented in the more descriptive and historical approach offered in Nash (forthcoming).¹ It presents a linguistic investigation of a list of Melanesian Mission placename data and works towards a broader theory about the ethnography of Melanesian Mission naming and Norfolk Island place-naming in general.

The list of names for analysis is presented below in Tables 1:

1.	Alalang Paen	13.	Patteson
2.	Big House	14.	Selwyn Bridge
3.	Bishop's Court	15.	Selwyn Pine Reserve
4.	Bishop Patteson Road	16.	Selwyn Pine Road
5.	Codrington	17.	St. Barnabas Chapel
6.	Cornish's	18.	Sul
7.	Dave Bailey's	19.	Taylor's Road
8.	Geare Pere	20.	Valis we Poa
9.	The Kerapai	21.	Vanua
10.	Lizzie Carr's	22.	William Kendall's
11.	Mission Road	23.	Williams
12.	Palpaltate Vat		

Table 1: Placenames associated with the Melanesian Mission on Norfolk Island

This data was sourced from secondary documents primarily digital copies of Julia Farr's diaries kept at the Norfolk Island Museum, various maps compiled by local Norfolk Islanders and a previously published compilation of Norfolk placenames.² Several other names were obtained through primary interview research. Additional primary house name data were collected during fieldwork on the island. Grammatical analysis of these names was undertaken.

Linguistic analysis

Several patterns emerge in the data:

1. A single English proper noun is productive as a house name, i.e. Codrington, Patteson and Williams
2. A single Mota common noun is productive as a placename, i.e. Sul (people) and Vanua (place).
3. English house names can take the form proper noun + possessive, i.e. Cornish's, Lizzie Carr's, William Kendall's and Dave Bailey's.
4. Adjective + noun functions as a house name form, i.e. Big House.
5. Proper noun + common noun is productive for placenames and road names, i.e. St. Barnabas Chapel, Selwyn Pine Reserve, Selwyn Pine Road, Selwyn Bridge, Bishop Patteson Road, Taylor's Road, Mission Road.
6. (Proper) noun + possessive + noun produces a single house name in the data set, i.e. Bishop's Court.
7. Mota nouns can take English articles to form placenames, i.e. The Kerapai (big tree or valley).

The Mota names Alalang Paen, Geare Pere, Palpaltate Vat and Valis we Poa will not be dealt with in detail here as their linguistic form does not contribute greatly to understanding patterns in other aspects of Norfolk placename grammar (see #1 below).

Looking at #1-#6, the question can be asked what extent these names share or do not share characteristics with other Norfolk placenames, i.e. does Melanesian Mission place-naming contribute anything linguistically significant rather than the mere presence of the Melanesian Mission as a historical period on Norfolk? Points towards answering this question are posed below:

1. Melanesian Mission placenames have Mota words in them. No other placenames on Norfolk have Mota words in them.
2. While there was the possibility for up to 27 languages to be in contact at any one time at the Mission, there do not appear to be any recorded non-Mota or non-English placenames. To reiterate the claim made in Nash (forthcoming),³ Pidgin English place-naming does not seem to have taken place or if any placenames did exist they were at least never recorded.
3. The principal forms of English Melanesian Mission placenames, i.e.

- Proper noun
- Proper noun + possessive
- Adjective + noun
- (Proper) noun + possessive + noun

are all present in other non-Melanesian Mission placenames on Norfolk, e.g. Monty, placename on the south coast, most likely named after a gentleman named Monty who drowned there. The name 'Monty Drown' is recorded on a map.⁴ Other variants have been used in interviews 'Side Monty Drown' (literally: Place Monty Drown) and 'Down Side Monty Drown'

- Hadley's, a house name on the west coast of the island.
- Rocky Point, the extreme south-west point of the area in the Hundred Acres area.
- Puppy's Point, a famous picnicking location on the far west coast.
- Thus while Melanesian Mission names are important historically to the Melanesian Mission, there appears little evidence to substantiate the claim that Melanesian Mission place-naming contributes anything linguistically significant not already present in other Norfolk placenames, aside from the lexical consideration that several Mota placenames exist.

Ethnographic analysis

The concise theoretical framework that will now be presented and tested is a synthesised tool that has been brought together as part of a longitudinal study documenting the linguistic and ethnographic history of place-naming on Norfolk Island. Considering and incorporating wider parameters of the natural ecology and intricate features of linguistic and social relationships on the island has clearly meant that linguistic descriptions, i.e. placename structure and grammar, cannot account for the entirety of the history of place-naming on Norfolk. In this perspective, linguistic descriptions must incorporate ethnographic descriptions—together they constitute a presentation of a wider history of Norfolk placename description.

Several tools could have been selected to aid in the linguistic and ethnographic analysis of Melanesian Mission placenames, e.g. *natural semantic metalanguage*⁵ or the standard analytical ethnographic methods outlined in Saville-Troike.⁶ These tools have been not been shown to be effective in analysing placenames while the components of the synthesised tool have. The rationale for the creation and use of this tool will not be outlined in detail here due to space constraints. The following two points, however, are worth noting:

1. The framework is constituted by several anthropological and ethnographic perspectives on language, people and place namely Milroy, Basso, Myers and Ingold.⁷ It also considers historical approaches to colonial history and cartographic landscape creation put forward by Carter.⁸
2. A single placename (house name) will be analysed based on the assumptions of a minimalist approach to linguistic analysis to linguistic analysis⁹, i.e. perspectives that claim that general and illustrative principles can be garnered from analysing very few yet pertinent data.

The placename is Dave Bailey's. 'Although it is said that the house was built around 1920 by Charles and Herbert Bailey, the style and some of the details appear to be much earlier. It may be possible that the materials or even substantial portions of the house were built from materials taken from the Melanesian Mission when the buildings were auctioned in 1920'.¹⁰

As regards the form of the name and the house name history data obtained in the early 1980s, the person remembered is clearly not the people who built

the house. It is plausible that Dave Bailey is related to either or both Charles and Herbert Bailey, who are possibly brothers. The possibility that he is a son to Charles or Herbert is likely considering that this is the common way houses are inherited on Norfolk. According to Milroy's network theory, this historical and hence linguistic relationship through a placename can be conceived in terms of 'overlapping networks' based in complex relationships of what it means to come from or belong to a place and how (linguistic) change occurs. People change history with and by names and the Baileys' past as a network of familial and societal relations on Norfolk Island is intertwined with and in the house name 'Dave Bailey's'. There may be some other connection(s) between the Baileys and the Melanesian Mission that do(es) not appear in the historical description of the placename given above.

Extending this idea network theory provides a perspective involving the creation of place or 'interanimation' where people animate place through experiences, emotions, remembrance and ultimately names.¹¹ In this conception place and the naming of places becomes a method by which we solidify personal visceral experiences and human presence back into space to create personalised place or 'landscape'. Dave Bailey's shows how people and place are linked reciprocally and how the Norfolk population remembers people and lineages addressing orientational aspects into names, i.e. 'Dave Bailey's' is used as a spatial descriptor on a map.¹² This name and place is a pragmatic tool to understand a specific place and family home. In addition to the pragmatic aspect of this name in relation to Basso's theory, the fact that it is remembered and used suggests that the Norfolk population most probably liked the Baileys as they continue to use this name—the name represents a valid, healthy and positive cultural artefact in the memory of certain members of the Norfolk population privy to such matters, i.e. this name is not present on a house or directional sign on the island.

Now taking Myers' perspective on the relationship between language and self and their solidification in landscape through place-naming, places can have linked with them stories and names of events that happened in those places; places can appear as biographical landmarks and narratives.¹³ In Myers' schema a placename may be intricately associated with a personal name or indeed be a personal name, or it may have evolved out of life event linking a personality to a particular place. The house name 'Dave Bailey's' solidifies the Bailey family into Norfolk memory, and to those who remember possibly relates the house's building materials to the old Melanesian Mission buildings. While there is nothing clear in the form of the name about the relationship between 'Dave Bailey's' and the Mission, this remembrance within the community may possibly be written ethnographically into the minds and recollection of those insiders who know intimately about the history of the relationship between the Baileys, the Mission and the house they lived in.

A further perspective illustrating embeddedness to and in place is Ingold's 'dwelling perspective'.¹⁴ Here social facts are generated and local worlds come into being around agents in a particular social and ecological setting. People are immersed in a 'lifeworld' environment which is continually changing and

conclusions as to the historical basis, use and appreciation of the name. Whether there is anything distinctly ethnographic directly relating to the name and its connection to the Melanesian Mission is not clear. This would require more analysis and potentially more interview based fieldwork to ascertain the extent of the relationship between the individual and collective social memory of the name and its connection to the Melanesian Mission. In summary this paper has:

1. Shown that a short list of Norfolk placenames can be subjected to traditional grammatical analysis to arrive at some illustrative patterns.
2. Presented a synthesised ethnographic tool that can be applied to a minimal dataset to acquire illustrative principles that can be extrapolated beyond the Melanesian Mission example to Norfolk placenames in general.
3. Shown that while there appears to be several distinct possibilities linking Melanesian Mission placenames to the place of Norfolk Island, it is very difficult to make conclusive claims about the linguistic, ethnographic and historical nature of place-naming on the Melanesian Mission on Norfolk Island.

(Joshua Nash was unable to be present at the Conference, but his paper was read by colleague Paul Monaghan.)

- 1 J. Nash, 'Place-naming of the Melanesian Mission, Norfolk Island, South Pacific', *Journal of Pacific History*, forthcoming.
- 2 P. Mühlhäusler, 'Changing names for a changing landscape: The case of Norfolk Island', *English World-wide*, 25:1 (2002), 59-91.
- 3 Nash, *ibid.*
- 4 M. Buffett, *Map* (Norfolk Island n.d.-c.1980).
- 5 See C. Goddard & A. Wierzbicka (eds) *Meaning and Universal Grammar: Theory and Empirical Findings* (Amsterdam 2002).
- 6 M. Saville-Troike, *The Ethnography of Communication: An Introduction* (3rd edition) (Malden 2003).
- 7 L. Milroy, *Language and Social Networks* (Oxford 1980); K. Basso, 'Wisdom sits in places: notes on Western Apache landscape' in S. Feld & K. Basso (eds) *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe 1996), 53-70; F.R. Myers, *Pitnapi country, Pitnapi Self: Sentiment, place, and politics among Western Desert Aborigines* (Berkeley 1991); T. Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment. Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London 2000).
- 8 P. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York 1988).
- 9 D.L. Everett, 'Coherent fieldwork', in P.G.J. van Stekelenburg (ed.), *Linguistics Today: Facing a Greater Challenge*, Volume 1 (Amsterdam 2004), 141-165.
- 10 R.V.J. Varman, *Survey Study of the First, Second and Third Settlements on Norfolk Island* (Canberra 1984), 156-157.
- 11 Basso, *ibid.* 55.
- 12 Cf. M. Martin, *Norfolk Island* (map) (Norfolk Island 1988); Varman, *op cit.*
- 13 Myers, *ibid.*
- 14 Ingold, *ibid.*, 153.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 15, 153.
- 16 Carter, *ibid.*

evolving around them—the inhabitants—the significance of which is incorporated into people's regular life and daily activities.¹⁵ In this perspective Ingold allows for the possibility that people intimately associated with a place can access and move through these social and ecological worlds. While not addressing language and names, Ingold's stance can easily be incorporated into the analysis of 'Dave Bailey's'. This name dwells in the physical place as well as the mental space of the minds of the people who use and remember the name. For those who associate 'Dave Bailey's' and the house (and possibly its building materials) to the Melanesian Mission, they are creating a matrix of inherent links between the name, the house and its location, the history of the Mission and how the materials came to be used in the house. Not only is the house name Dave Bailey's associated with the place where the house was built, the name and its association with Norfolk and (potentially) the Mission 'dwells' and 'lives' in the minds and social memory of the people who are networked into knowing this name. The linguistic manifestation of this—the formal structure, semantics and pragmatics of the house name *Dave Bailey's*—is only a small element of understanding the importance of this name and realising where it actually exists.

The final historical and specifically cartographic point of view to be considered is Carter's representation of spatial history.¹⁶ This approach is about discovery. Prior to discovery, a place does not exist in the sense that a known place exists. This knowing comes about through naming and, in particular, mapping. This is what Carter feels are the most important elements of imperialism or claiming: naming, describing, mapping and creating and writing history. Placenames are important descriptors in Carter's scheme. Within this framework Dave Bailey's is brought into existence and reality through appellation and the process of name giving. Giving the name is a power mandate and a method of localised linguistic imperialism regardless of the extent of the use of this power. Knowing or not knowing the history of Dave Bailey's has ramifications and an impact on how and where this place exists in specific time and place and how people can come to 'own' particular names, their histories and even their economy. Carter's spatial history also generates interest cartographically by showing that while Dave Bailey's is not and was never located on the Melanesian Mission grounds, the cartographic, spatial and historical representation of the Mission spread further afield on Norfolk. Again, having historical and social access to this name and its spatial aspect forms a part of the possibility of literal or metaphorical imperialism through the use of a name usage and name giving.

An ethnographic analysis synthesising several ethnographic and historical perspectives on place analysis appears better equipped to provide a clearer and more comprehensive, albeit inconclusive, analysis of placenames associated with the Melanesian Mission on Norfolk Island than traditional grammatical analysis. Discounting the four Mota names in the data set, formal structural and grammatical analysis of placename forms does not show anything quintessential to English Melanesian Mission placenames. The ethnographic analysis has shown that analysing one placename (house name) can lead to a range of possible