JOHNSON, D.E. (2021). LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPING AND THE PACIFIC REGION: COLONIZATION, INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES, AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE THEORY. Lexington Books.

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This book was completed in 2020, shortly before the death of Diane Johnson who was a Senior Lecturer at the University of Waikato in Aotearoa New Zealand. I had the privilege of working with the author for many years and our conversations around Linguistic Landscapes (LL) increased significantly during the writing of her book. I have a keen interest in LL, especially insofar as it relates to Critical Discourse Theory (CDT) and the way in which LL stands as a voice for the preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages. The book is a testament to the author's belief that we need to pay close attention to the voices of indigenous peoples as we strive to deal with the many challenges that currently face our planet. It is a book that has something important to offer students of Indigenous Studies, linguists and, indeed, everyone who cares about Planet Earth. The book proposes a fresh perspective and raises our awareness and need to readdress the impacts of dominant languages and cultures on the languages and cultures of indigenous peoples in the Pacific region.

Themes covered in the book around the value and importance of language revitalization and sustainability are both recognizable and relatable to linguists in Aoteaora New Zealand. As is strongly highlighted in this book, to move forward on language preservation and revitalization we need to review the history and impact of colonization, and Johnson delves into this history in the Pacific. However, her message is also of immediate relevance to our current global focus where indigenous societies are seeking to reclaim their cultures and language in the face of impacts such as global warming, human over-population and diaspora, ever-increasing pandemics, and the loss of species diversity.

The book comprises five main chapters and a conclusion, with each addressing content that makes the battle for revitalization in the Pacific region come to life through the lenses of LL and CDT. What I particularly liked about this book is the fact that it does not assume that all its readers are already familiar with CDT and critical discourse analysis (which underpin the analytical approach adopted) or with research on LL. Instead, in *Chapter 1*, we are introduced to each of these areas in a way that is appropriate for those new to it, including, for example, undergraduate students, while also serving as a useful *aide mémoire* for those who are already familiar with the relevant literature. It is, therefore, a book that

can be usefully introduced at both undergraduate and graduate levels, particularly in the context of Indigenous Studies courses.

The author explores four areas of the South Pacific with a focus on language and content of written signage and what it tells us about the current state of relationships among peoples. The four areas the author takes us on a journey through include the sacred mountain region of Mount Maunakea in the Hawaiian Kingdom, the small rural township of Tirau on the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, iconic buildings in Noumea, Kanaky / New Caledonia, and the streets of Pape'ete, Tahiti. According to the author, the signage used in these places tells us about the current state of issues connected to colonization, indigeneity and resistance. *Chapters 2* through *5* explore each of these regions in the form of case studies in LL and each chapter begins with an historical account of the societies colonized and the process of colonization. The first of these (Hawai'i) was colonized by the USA and is generally regarded as the USA's fiftieth state. Here, the focus is on a peaceful protest, largely involving Native Hawaiians, located on the side of Maunakea, Hawai'i's tallest mountain. Partly because many of the signs associated with that protest have appeared on social media sites around the world, this small local protest has attracted a great deal of international attention. It has even drawn attention to the fact that many legal authorities argue that the USA is an illegal occupier of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, a kingdom that was widely recognized internationally in the first half of the 19th century.

From the Hawaiian mountainside, the author moves on to a small rural township called Tirau in Aotearoa New Zealand (*Chapter 3*). This township was first occupied by British settlers in the 1860s. Here, she explores signage in the township's main commercial/tourism area, demonstrating that that signage largely ignores the township's Māori origins and heritage, reinforcing the myth that British settlers were the first to beat back the bush and explore the possibilities of cultivation. As this chapter focuses on Tirau, a town I have often visited and taken visitors to, I became absorbed in the historical perspective taken by the author on the notion of Tirau as a "twenty-first century colonial fantasy landscape" (Johnson, 2021, p. 47). These thoughts are reinforced by the author's recount of the placement of Māori families in-between mainly non-Māori areas during periods of urbanization (called "pepper-potting") leading to a forced assimilation and subjection to the dominant language (Nock, 2014, pp. 16-17). In the content for this chapter, the author shares findings from interviews conducted with visitors to Tirau.

The next two locations explored in the book have both been colonized by the French – Kanakay / New Caledonia and Tahiti. In the case of the first of these (*Chapter 4*), the author explores written signs associated with two iconic buildings associated with the capital city, Noumea - – the *Jean-Marie Tjibaou*

Cultural Centre and the *Federation of Lay Works* building. The first of these, although ostensibly dedicated to indigenous languages and cultures, was nevertheless found to have signage largely in English, French and Japanese. The second, providing an important cultural site in the past, was at the time of the study, abandoned, awaiting demolition and covered in graffiti.

Finally, readers are introduced to the names of streets and commercial properties in a largely tourist area of the capital of Tahiti, Pape'ete (*Chapter 5*). Here, while the names of streets were found to celebrate the French colonial enterprise (notwithstanding the massive negative impact of French nuclear experimentation), there were found to be indications everywhere of neglect and poverty. Furthermore, the dictates of metropolitan France in relation to the language of signage were found to have been largely ignored by those responsible for commercial signage.

In concluding this linguistic landscape-centred exploration of parts of the colonized Pacific region, Dr Johnson makes the following observation:

> The colonizers had a vision of themselves and their activities that was almost entirely positive … Lands have been stolen. Cultures have been ridiculed. Languages have been silenced. And yet, there is resistance. Meanings and identities are open to contestation, especially at times of crisis. And evidences of that contestation are often to be found in linguistic landscapes (p. 121).

This is a book that I would recommend to any academic or student with an interest in the Pacific region. After reading this book, readers will develop a stronger awareness and critical understanding of public signage when travelling in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond.

References

Nock, S. (2014). *Te whakaako i te reo Māori i te kura auraki tuarua i Aotearoa nei: Kei tua o te awe māpere. The teaching of te reo Māori in English-medium secondary schools in New Zealand: Beyond the mask.* [PhD thesis, Doctor of Philosophy, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand]. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/10289/8856