GUEST EDITORIAL

Colonialism and linguistic thought

In this, a special section of the special November double issue of the *Bulletin*, it is my pleasure to introduce two substantial essays addressing the relationship between colonialism (in both cases British colonialism) and linguistic thought. The first, by Javed Majeed, addresses developments in Anglo-Indian glossaries in the last years of the British East India Company. The second, by Tony Crowley, explores the history of linguistic ideas in Ireland under British rule, and the legal, economic, and cultural factors underlying the shift from Gaelic to English. Their inclusion in the *Bulletin* appears particularly timely in light of the invitation made by Peter Burke in the Lesley Sieffert Lecture at the HSS Colloquium in September to consider the interdisciplinary possibilities of our field. As those who were present will remember, Peter's lecture raised a great deal of interest and debate throughout the rest of the Colloquium, as to how to foster communication with (for example) historians, literary scholars, psychologists, anthropologists, or historians of science. In light of this discussion, the essays that follow represent, among other things, an insight into one particularly exciting and significant interdisciplinary intersection, between colonial studies and the history of linguistic thought.

Javed Majeed's article, an examination of *Hobson-Jobson* alongside other Anglo-Indian glossaries of the early-19th century, shows how this text can be read as a particularly revealing mode of self-definition or 'auto-ethnography' on the part of employees of the East India Company in its dying days. In so doing, this essay also sheds light on a corpus of linguistic representation developing apart from, although connected to, nineteenth-century metropolitan shifts in the production of glossaries and dictionaries. This essay forms part of an ongoing wider project, funded by the British Academy, and will undoubtedly be of great interest to many *Bulletin* readers. Among other things, the project examines the development of Anglo-Indian alongside Urdu glossaries in this period, and explores the ways in which both Indian and British glossary-writers deployed and wrangled with conventions of linguistic analysis coming from the European and Urdu traditions.

Tony Crowley's contribution, meanwhile, turns to the protracted struggle over English versus Gaelic in colonial Ireland. His essay, offering a detailed and ambitious historical view of the question, illuminates the way in which language politics and 'linguistic ideas' intersected with each other, serving as objects of ideological and personal struggle between linguists, legislators, nationalists, and ordinary speakers of the languages in question. This essay builds on Tony's long-standing research interest in language and colonialism in Ireland, most recently represented in *Wars of Words: The Politics of Language in Ireland 1537-2004* (Oxford University Press, 2005). While these two contributions, in their very different emphases, give a great sense of the diversity of work being done in the field, there are also important synergies between them; not least in the attention they pay to anxieties about acculturation and assimilation on the part of British colonizers, played out – as Crowley in particular emphasizes – most significantly in the field of language. More generally, both essays serve as timely reminders of the impact of 'linguistic ideas' far beyond the academy,

as well as of the need to situate debates about language within their historical, cultural, and political contexts.

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