The Multi-level and Multi-layer of History and Memory Behind the Linguistic Landscape of Dali Old Town in China

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In the LL studies, street names provide visual evidence on how language on public display can reveal, encode and shape social memory (Alderman 2002). Rose-Redwood et. al use the term 'streetscapes' (2017) to address identity and memory issues within contested urban arenas. This paper examines some main street names in Dali Old Town in Yunnan China to mediate the social and historical relationship between its LL and memory. As the source of the Bai group, Dali also witnessed remarkable social changes across China's modern history. Now, Dali is seen as a well known ancient town highlighting Bai culture and attracts tourists at home and abroad. However, due to its lack of unified written format, Bai language is absent from the Dali's LL. To understand what is remained and what is added int the linguistic makeup, an original survey was conducted on one field trip in 2018. Based on first-hand photographic data, this paper features the multi-level and multi-layer nature of history and memory commemorated in Dali. Street names serve as linguistic evidence on two levels of remained memory. The first is at a national and political level. Two main roads in Dali honour the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 (Figure 1, 2). The second is at a local level. Two gate names are named after the places of Bai's origin to commemorate Bai's history (Figure 3). Meanwhile, a new history is also added in the collective memory of Dali through the renaming practice. During the 1980s, an arch was built in Nation Defense street which was later renamed as Foreigners' Street. This resonated with the local authority's urban planning expectation on attracting international tourists to Dali. Nevertheless, the replacement is not complete. The old street sign still remains with less prominent visibility (Figure 5). This street name change also reflects a shift of emphasis from commemorating the pre-PRC national history to the post-PRC economic reform. Such a street naming and renaming practice follow a broader pattern, that is, the overt use of Chinese and covert references to Bai's culture and memory stay in harmony (Figure 6). Due to the lack of Bai's written language, Chinese on street names not only provides geographic information but also signifies Bai's culture and history. Indeed, verbal and nonverbal Bai indexicality takes place in Dali (Figure 7, 8).

In conclusion, street names convey meanings more than one level. The multi-layer of history and memory behind the street naming and renaming practice can be national and local, political and socioeconomic, historical and cultural. This paper also extends the scope of inquiry on using the overt use of one language to index another ethnolinguistic vitality and the memory with it. Beyond the geographic function, street names also carry a cultural and historical dimension and thus are

referential and symbolic (Neethling 2016), which calls for more deep-seated discussion in further LL research.

Key words: Linguistic Landscape, multi-level, multi-layer, memory, Dali

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Appendix:

Figure 1: Fuxing Road

Figure 2: Peolpe's Road

Figure 3: Erhai Gate & CangShan Gate

Figure 4: Foreigners' Street

Figure 5: HuGuo Street (Nation Defense Street)

Figure 6: Municipal warning sign

Figure 7: A'Peng Chop Snackery, People's Road

Figure 8: Golden Flower Silverware, Fuxing Road