

Preface

by

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This volume, which was in gestation since late 2009, is the fruit of our cooperation, as editors, and our interdisciplinary research into the role played by language in Central Europe in the past and nowadays.¹ It goes without saying that this publication was made possible only thanks to the kind participation of the contributors from all around the world and to the generous support from the Global COE Program “Reshaping Japan’s Border Studies.” Political and linguistic borders as imagined, shaped, and reshaped have become a novel field of study in their own right, vindicated by the fact that many developments in modern Central Europe, be they linguistic or political, are difficult to explicate without bearing in mind the dynamic interaction of the political and the linguistic that underlies them in this part of the world.

At the turn of the 21st century, it became clear that an interdisciplinary approach toward linguistic problems in Central Europe was gaining importance. Likewise, archive-based historical studies or purely social scientific inquiries into this vertical midsection of the Old Continent fail to explain some basic issues that underlie the area’s social reality. It has been proposed time and again that linguists, historians, and social scientists of Central Europe, instead of keeping to the narrow disciplinary confines of their respective turfs as defined in the high age of nationalism between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries, join forces. This adventurous proposal was authoritatively repeated by Robert J. W. Evans,² but not unrealistic as clearly evidenced by the success of Peter Burke’s *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*³ and the

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² Robert J. W. Evans, *The Language of History and the History of Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

2010 relaunch of the *Journal of the Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas* more succinctly entitled *Language and History*.

Delving into Central European issues since the 1990s, we have come to a similar conclusion, though working toward it from opposite ends, namely, Motoki Nomachi from a background in linguistics and Tomasz Kamusella from a background in history and social sciences. The latter did so taking into consideration the social and political significance of the linguistic in his two monographs par excellence on modern Central Europe and on Silesia,⁴ a Central European region.⁵ On the other hand, Motoki Nomachi, while editing a volume on *Grammaticalization in Slavic Languages* and in his articles related to grammatical changes in Slavic languages, pointed to some extralinguistic (that is, social, historical, and the like) elements as possible factors triggering language change.⁶

In this volume, we offer the reader an interdisciplinary look at Serbia's autonomous province of Vojvodina, and ask in its title whether it is a typical Central European region or not. In search of a reply, the contributors probe the question by analyzing intellectual and political discourses on linguistic and political borders, as deployed within Vojvodina and introduced to it from outside. Uniquely, unlike almost all other autonomous regions and nation-states in Central Europe, Vojvodina is officially multilingual and multicriptural multiscriptural. The norm of one language and one script reigns usually unabated elsewhere in the region.

3 Peter Burke *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

4 Tomasz Kamusella, *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009).

5 Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalisms: The Emergence of National and Ethnic Groups in Prussian Silesia and Austrian Silesia, 1848–1918* [Ser: Central European Studies]. (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007).

6 Motoki Nomachi, ed., *Grammaticalization in Slavic Languages: From Areal and Typological Perspectives* [Ser: 21st Century COE Program Slavic Eurasian Studies, Vol. 23]. (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2011).

Until its progressive breakup between 1991 and 2007, the sole Central European polity that escaped this fate of normative monolingualism-cum-monoscripturalism was Yugoslavia with its two official scripts (Cyrillic and Latin) and its numerous official languages (the dominant Serbo-Croatian, and alongside it, Albanian, Hungarian, Macedonian, Slovak, Slovenian, Romanian, and Rusyn). In the wake of the destructive wars, at the turn of the 21st century however, the polity was replaced with monolingual nation-states or national polities aspiring to such monolingualism. This development required the splitting of Serbo-Croatian into (thus far) the state languages of Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian and even into Bunjevac, which is a community language with semi-formal status in Vojvodina.

Vojvodina managed (partly) to escape this monolingualization enforced by national governments across Central Europe. In its multilingual character, it reminds us of the former Yugoslavia and Austria-Hungary, which for many are embodiments of “true” Central Europe. Hence, although at present the official use of multiple languages in a polity or autonomous region is unusual, and unwanted when it occurs (see the cases of the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and of Kosovo), it was a norm in not so distant a past. And because during most of its history Central Europe and its polities were variously polyglossic, we believe it is justified to dub Vojvodina a typical Central European region, though at present most regions and polities in Central Europe are quite un-Central European in this respect. The enlarged European Union with its twenty-fourthree official languages, if it is to be the future of Europe, is more similar to the Central Europe of a hundred years ago than today’s Central Europe.

It is hard to say what the future may have in store for Central Europe, but the aforementioned developments make Vojvodina a salient case that may hold answers to the questions on how multilingualism could be re-introduced to Central Europe within the broader framework of the European Union, and how it should be managed in order to limit its potential for conflict. Unfortunately, Vojvodina is still too little known, an issue we wish to begin rectifying with this selection of articles on various aspects of language and politics in the region.

Bojan Belić describes the present-day ethnic and linguistic situation in Vojvodina and its reflection in appropriate legislation. Inna I Leshchi-

lovskaia invites readers on a tour into the past when the region, within the Habsburg lands, became the cradle of modern Serbian culture, whose formation was strongly influenced by Russia, challenging the Serbs with the dilemma of how to shape their own culture “between East and West.” Biljana Sikimić and Miroslav Dudok analyze Vojvodina’s Romanians and Slovaks, respectively, with special attention paid to the communities’ languages. The last two articles deal with another aspect of the multilingual Vojvodina, or the “hidden” linguistic minorities, who do not have official status in the region. Masumi Kameda zooms in on the revival or creation of Vojvodina’s new (or old?) ethnolinguistic group of Bunjevacs.⁷

Perhaps, Paul Robert Magocsi is right saying that “of the making of nationalities there is no end.”⁸

Sapporo, November 2013

7 These articles do not exhaust the problem of multilingualism in Vojvodina, but we hope that they amount to a stepping stone that other researchers may build on.

8 Paul Robert Magocsi, *Of the Making of Nationalities There Is No End* [Ser: Eastern European Monographs, Vol. 540] (Boulder CO: Eastern European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University press, New York, 1999).