Words in Space and Time

Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe

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With forty-two extensively annotated maps, this Atlas offers novel insights into the history and mechanics of how Central Europe's languages have been made, unmade, and deployed for political action. The innovative application of linguistics, history, and cartography makes a wealth of hard-to-reach knowledge readily available to both specialist and general readers. It combines information on languages, dialects, alphabets, religions, mass violence, or migrations over an extended period of time.

The story first focuses on Central Europe's dialect continua, the emergence of states, and the spread of writing technology from the tenth century onward. Most of the maps concentrate on the past two centuries. The main storyline opens with the emergence of the Western European concept of the nation, in accord with which the ethnolinguistic nation-states of Italy and Germany were founded. In the Central European view, a "proper" nation is none other than the speech community of a single language. The Atlas aspires to help users make the intellectual leap of perceiving languages as products of human history and a part of culture. Like states, nations, universities, towns, associations, art, beauty, religion, injustice, or atheism—languages are artefacts invented and shaped by individuals and their groups.

About the Author

Tomasz Kamusella is an interdisciplinary historian of modern Central and Eastern Europe, with a focus on language politics and nationalism. He teaches in the School of History at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, Britain. His previous works include Politics and the Slavic Languages (Routledge, 2021) and The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe (Palgrave, 2009).