Words in Space and Time

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Words in Space and Time

Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe

Tomasz Kamusella

Central European University Press
Budapest – Vienna – New York


This long in making magnificent work was supported by the late Eric Hobsbawm: “[I]t seems clear to me that your proposed Atlas will be of enormous interest and value.” 12 March 2009

“A major and original contribution to our knowledge of the European past, based on an innovative combination of linguistics, history, and mapping. The sophisticated maps are extremely valuable by virtue of their unusual richness in combining information on languages, dialects, alphabets, religions, mass violence and migrations over an extended time frame.”

Andrea Graziosi, Professor of History, Università di Napoli Federico II

“Research on spatial transformations focusing on linguistic issues remains rare within border studies and political geography. This Atlas will become an essential reference that will bring the insights of linguistic studies conducted worldwide into dialogue with each other.”

Akihiro Iwashita, Professor and Director of the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University

“This extensive Atlas is a blessing for everyone who is interested in Central Europe as a cultural or political phenomenon. The production of an atlas is labour intensive and expensive. But, as this new work shows, the effort is worth it. The Atlas provides us not only with an intriguing regional study but also a most important contribution to European studies.”

From the Foreword by Anngret Simms, Professor Emeritus of Historical Geography, University College Dublin; Editor of the Irish Historic Towns Atlas; member of the Royal Irish Academy

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).