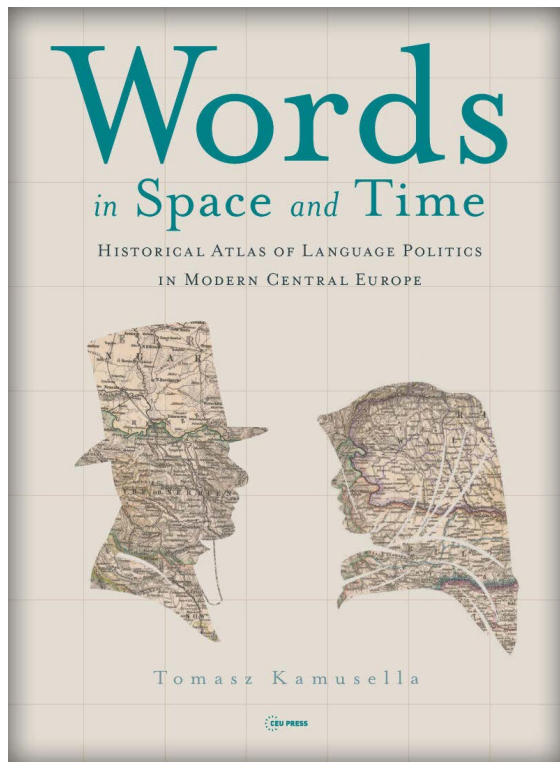


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Book review

of Tomasz Kamusella, *Words In Space And Time: A Historical Atlas Of Language Politics In Modern Central Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2021. 308 p.)



For the scholars of Central and East European Studies, the name Tomasz Kamusella needs no introduction. A habilitated doctor in cultural studies with extensive experience in prestigious universities and research centres around the globe, he is known for his interdisciplinary approach to the intersection of language and history, with his expertise primarily – but not exclusively – focused on the Central and East European context. Originally from Upper Silesia, he is currently Reader in History at the University of St Andrews (United Kingdom) and is the author of over 300 publications in several languages. His three dozen books include the landmark monograph *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), with recent works including *Politics and the Slavic Languages* (Routledge, 2021).

The volume reviewed here, *Words in Space and Time: A Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe*, is published by Central European University Press. After the warm words of introduction in Professor Annegret Simms' foreword, the book's acknowledgements section reveals behind-the-scenes information about the genesis of the project, the challenges and serendipitous events that accompanied its implementation, and its happy resolution in the form of the present publication. Accordingly, the reader is informed that the volume represents the distillation of a decade-long endeavour, involving a wide range of international connections as well as contact with myriad languages and cultures.

This is then followed by two further brief sections. The first, entitled "Preface", outlines the volume's contents and locates its scope at the interdisciplinary nexus of history and language, highlighting the fundamental concept of *Einzelssprache* and the need – central to so much of Kamusella's scholarship on the topic – to go beyond the ethnolinguistic norm that has been so commonplace in Central Europe and elsewhere. This call for recognition of greater linguistic (and by extension, ethnocultural) diversity is exemplified in the subsequent introductory section, where Kamusella briefly presents his own language biography. From detailing his childhood in Upper Silesia to recounting his experiences of acquiring English and later a host of other languages, by narrating his own linguistic journey, Kamusella illustrates that it is indeed possible to think differently about the notion of *Einzelssprache* and in what way we, as readers and scholars, can reconsider, reinterpret, and reflect on how languages and linguistic varieties can be approached in ethnonational and socio-political terms.

The book comprises 42 short chapters, each comprising a full-page colour map of Central Europe together with a relevant essay which provides the necessary historical, linguistic, and sociocultural context. The length of these texts typically ranges from three to four pages, but can sometimes be a

little longer. The chapters appear largely in chronological order and are mostly synchronic analyses authored by Kamusella, although five of the chapters are guest contributions from noted international scholars. The overwhelming focus of the volume is on the twentieth century, though the maps and the texts, which accompany them, encompass a period of over a thousand years.

Starting in the ninth century before moving onto the 11th, 16th, and 18th centuries, Chapters 1 to 8 provide a snapshot of dialect continua and writing systems at specific points in the medieval and early modern era, thus making it possible for the reader to trace their appearance, evolution, and even disappearance over time. In the ninth chapter of the book, entitled “Europa Media anno 1721: The Latin-Language Geography of Early Modern Central Europe”, the classical philologist Lav Šubarić notes the enduring presence of that language in the Central European context even though it had become largely obsolete in the rest of the continent. This is complemented by Kamusella’s analysis of wider moves towards *Einzelsprachen* in the subsequent chapter, which presents and examines the region’s official languages in the year 1721.

The eleventh chapter zooms on the Balkans to provide a detailed overview of ethnic cleansing in the years preceding the First and Second Balkan Wars (1912/13). The subsequent six chapters are snapshots of the year 1910 – firstly in terms of presenting and analysing relevant dialect continua and writing systems that were then extant, before Chapter 14 maps and discusses the geographical correspondence between language, nation, and state at the time. This is followed by three chapters by guest contributors, each of whom focuses on the geographical context of Central Europe through the specific prism of a particular less commonly-spoken language and its worldview. For example, Michael Talbot notes the educational focus of Ottoman Turkish maps and their roles in wider Ottoman narratives; Agata Reibach outlines the concept of Yiddishland within the Central Europe of that time; and Walter Żelazny’s contribution (translated from the Polish by Kamusella) presents the interesting case of placename formation in the constructed language of Esperanto.

Chapter 18 gives a comprehensive analysis of the numerous short-lived polities that emerged (or at least attempted to) amid the instability that characterised much of Central Europe during the first quarter of the twentieth century (1908–1924). This

instability permeates the map that immediately follows it, which focuses on ethnic cleansing during the same time period, before Chapter 20 again presents a synchronic analysis of the overlap of language, nation, and state at the end of 1918 (and which is very interesting to compare with the 1910 equivalent as portrayed in Chapter 14).

In Chapter 21, entitled “Non-State Minority, Regional and Unrecognized Languages, and Written Dialects in Central Europe, Nineteenth Through Twenty-First Centuries”, Kamusella delves into important questions pertaining to these languages in the age of *Einzelsprache* and ethnonationalism. With the map key listing over 150 linguistic varieties arranged by language family, this wide-ranging chapter provides an important historical and (socio) linguistic overview right up to the present day, explaining *en route* the work of Aleksandr Dulichenko and using the example of multilingual Wikipedias to note that this “indicates an unprecedented level of emancipation enjoyed on the web by speakers of micro-languages” (p. 97).

The difficult decade of the 1930s is the subject of the next four maps, the first two of which interpret Russian linguist Nikolai Trubetzkoy’s concept of the *Sprachbund* in radically different ways. This is followed by an analysis of contemporary writing systems and (in common with Chapters 14 and 20) Chapter 25 provides a snapshot of language, nation, and state in the year 1930. The maps and essays in Chapters 26 to 30 deal with the horrors of ethnic cleansing, starting from the 1930s, moving through World War Two and its aftermath, up until the end of the Cold War. These are counterpointed by Chapter 31, which is a further isomorphic presentation of language, nation, and state; unlike its predecessors, however, a diachronic perspective is adopted this time, covering the years from 1974 (when Albanian, Hungarian, and Romanian became co-official languages of Federal Yugoslavia) to 1989, the year of the fall of Communism. In chapter 32, “Moldavian and Central Europe: Европа Централэ ын анул 1980 (Europa centrală în anul 1980)”, Kamusella gives an overview of the historical, linguistic, and socio-political background pertaining to Moldovan.

The final ten chapters of the volume all provide snapshots of the year 2009, opening with the customary presentation and analysis of dialect continua and writing systems. An additional comparative map (Chapter 35) allows direct contrast between the writing systems used in the present day with those of over a millennium ago, and is followed by

the final isomorphic presentation of language, nation, and state in the Central European context.

Chapters 37 and 38 both provide insights into ethnolinguistic boundaries in modern Central Europe, albeit from different approaches. The former centres on physical manifestations of these limitations, such as international borders, whereas the latter moves online to explore this phenomenon through the many different language versions of Wikipedia. Taking Kamusella's assertion that "a handy litmus test of the presence of ethnolinguistic nationalism as the leading ideology of statehood legitimation and maintenance in a given polity is the medium of education at the university level" (p. 159), Chapter 39 gives an excellent and detailed historical and contemporary overview of the complex and evolving language policies adopted by various tertiary institutions across Central Europe over the last three centuries.

Chapter 40 presents a pair of maps relating to Roma settlements in Central Europe, to which the noted specialists Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov provide the necessary context. In the penultimate chapter to the volume, Kamusella presents a pioneering map in the Silesian language, outlining information relating to the current status and standardisation of this less widely spoken language.

The final map, entitled "Isomorphism of Language, Nation, and State in Central Europe, and in East and Southeast Asia, 2009" is a comparative analysis of two geographical areas that may at first seem to have little in common, but on further analysis share a number of commonalities. Indeed, Kamusella states that "at present there are only two clusters of ethnolinguistic nation-states in the world, one in Central Europe and the other in East and Southeast Asia". Accordingly, this unusual but fitting comparison provides the perfect capstone to the series of maps and analytical essays which have preceded it.

To comment briefly on the book's presentation and style, the additional physical presence of languages such as Ottoman Turkish, Silesian, and Yiddish in the relevant chapter titles (e. g. Chapters 9, 15, 16, 17, 32, and 41) is a nice touch, thus allowing the reader some practical exposure to the wealth of linguistic diversity that Central Europe contains. In addition, the accompanying texts are all written in an eminently readable manner, with their clear and concise nature making them an ideal synthesis of these complex topics, as well as an excellent starting point for further research. The book

is completed by a glossary which helpfully defines almost 300 of the key terms used, as well as a comprehensive list of references which is structured on a chapter-by-chapter basis.

In short, the scope, quality, and clarity of the contents make this a book suitable for both novice and experienced scholars alike. In addition, with the spectre of conflict once again present in Europe, the themes presented and analysed in this volume will appeal to everyone who is interested in gaining a greater understanding of the current geopolitical situation. For this reason, it is particularly important to state that *Words in Space and Time: A Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe* is also available online in Open Access format, thus ensuring that it reaches as wide an audience as possible.

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