

Words in Space and Time: Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe. By Tomasz Kamusella. Budapest–Vienna–New York: Central European University, 2021. 250 pp.¹

Tomasz Kamusella is a scholar from Poland whose main fields of research have been language politics, nationalism, and ethnicity, topics he has studied from an interdisciplinary perspective. The idea of his recent book *Words in Space and Time: Historical Atlas of Language Politics in Modern Central Europe* (hereinafter referred to as *Historical Atlas*) came in the mid-2000s as he was finishing his seminal monograph *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (Palgrave, 2009). Hence, this interdisciplinary, encyclopedic atlas represents a synthesis of his previous work with the difference that cartography is now given a central place. Inspired by Paul Robert Magocsi's renowned *Historical Atlas of (East) Central Europe* (1992/2019), Kamusella, working in close cooperation with professional cartographer Robert Chmielewski, elaborated a series of annotated maps as spatial expressions “for the formation of political processes that would have been difficult to express in words alone” (p.ix).

The *Historical Atlas* contains 42 chapters, along with a glossary, a bibliography, and an index. Each chapter consists of map(s) and an explanatory text, which is reminiscent of historiographical narratives, as well as reflections on the theoretical concepts on which these texts are based. As he explains in the introduction, Kamusella was born and raised in a multi-ethnic and multilingual region of Upper Silesia (Poland), so he encountered many contradictions between his daily experiences and the narratives to which he was exposed in his formal schooling. This prompted him to re-examine the radical “demographic engineering” which took place in the region. Although *Historical Atlas* resonates with a historiographical approach, it is in a methodological sense based on concepts from sociolinguistics and nationalism studies, such as *Einzelssprache*, dialect continuum, and ethnolinguistic nationalism. The choice of a comparative approach, in Kamusella's view, distances Central Europe (hereinafter referred to as CE) from the self-celebratory monologues disguised as national language histories and reduces any national myopia. By comparing CE with different

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world regions, he aims to show that CE ethnolinguistic nationalism based on the myth of language as a natural (living) entity and the tripartite ideological concept of (one) “language = nation = state” is not necessarily present in other social and political systems.

The *Historical Atlas* moves chronologically, starting with CE’s dialect continua, speech communities, writing technology, and the emergence of states from the ninth century onwards. The maps show simultaneously the official and the unofficial borders of different political entities. With the intention of presenting the dynamics of ethno-linguistic communities and their literary languages, Kamusella chose the milestones in history, mainly those that changed the demographic structure of the region.

Maps 1–6 depict the distribution of dialect continua and writing systems from the ninth century until the establishment of Ottoman rule in the region. These maps distinguish dialect continua and writing systems, “as full literacy became the accepted norm actualized through (...) *Einzel Sprachen* in the meaning of ‘written languages’” (p.8; Maps 1–2). In the first half of the eleventh century, migration and socio-political changes altered the ethnolinguistic makeup of the region, i.e., expansion of Finno-Ugric and Turkic ethnic groups to the Danubian Basin and the gradual division of the original Slavic dialect continua into a north and a south Slavic part (Maps 3–4). Maps 5–6 illustrate the main political, social and ethnolinguistic change caused by the establishment of Ottoman rule across Anatolia and the Balkans, while the west of CE was under Habsburg rule.

Maps 7–10 represent the changes that began to take place in 1721, when many long wars finally came to an end, especially the religious ones, as well as the war between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. As Kamusella explains, “At that time the logic of expulsions or exterminations was (ethno-)religious in its character, not (ethno-)linguistic” (p.34). Lav Šubarić collaborated on map 9, which shows the Latin-language geography of early modern Europe. Map 10 is devoted to the official languages and writing systems in 1721, when the “separation of a ‘holy tongue’ and a secular *Einzel Sprache* also marked the boundary between the politics of early modernity dominated by religion and the modern age of ethnolinguistic nationalisms” (p.49).

Maps 11–17 elaborate the social, political, and ethnolinguistic changes that took place from 1721 until World War I, changes which further invigorated ethno-linguistic nationalism. The atlas’ series depicting violent “demographic engineering,” including the most important incidences of ethnic cleansing, slavery, and genocide, begins with map 11. Map 12 shows that “neither the rise

and spread of ethnoreligious and ethnolinguistic nationalism across Central Europe during the nineteenth century, nor the founding of successive nation-states influenced in any substantial manner the pattern of the region's dialect continua as obtaining since the late Middle Ages" (p.58). Map 14 shows the isomorphism of language, nation, and state in CE by 1910, revealing that most people in the region lived in non-national polities, e.g., Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, etc. At the same time, ethnolinguistic nationalism was a growing force. Representations of CE topography in different sources in 1910 were elaborated by Michael Talbot (Ottoman Turkish, Map 15), Agata Reibach (Yiddish, Map 16), and Walter Żelazny (Esperanto, Map 17).

Maps 18–25 focus on the linguistic and socio-political processes from 1908 until the beginning of World War II. Map 18 offers an overview of the quasi- or short-lived polities of the period between 1908 and 1924 with a list of 74 state formations. The processes of ethnic cleansing in CE during the Balkan Wars, World War I, and in the aftermath of the Great War are depicted in map 19. World War I "destroyed or dramatically overhauled all Central Europe's polities" (p.91) and led to the dissolution of multinational empires, population exchanges, and increased isomorphism of language, nation, and state (Map 20). Map 21 is devoted to non-state minority, regional, and unrecognized languages and written dialects in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Maps 22 and 23 offer representations of linguistic areas (*Sprachbünde*) in CE. Map 25 shows the growing tendency towards isomorphism of language, nation, and state in CE, while Map 26 shows ethnic cleansing during the 1930s.

Maps 26–31 geographically illustrate and describe instances of ethnic cleansing from the rise of fascism in the 1930s to the end of the Cold War. Map 31 shows the outcome of these violent processes, which were characterized by strong inclinations towards isomorphism of language, nation, and state. Despite the fact that after World War II there was hardly any isomorphic nation-state in Europe and regardless of the political supranational endeavors of the Soviet Bloc and Yugoslavia, ethnolinguistic nationalism was "the sole fully accepted ideology of statehood construction, legitimation, and maintenance across the region" (p.131).

With Map 32 on the Moldavian language and the imposition of Cyrillic and Latin scripts on Moldavian speakers, Kamusella addresses the issue of deviation from the rule of "(one) language-nation-state" in CE. Maps 33–39 bear evidence of, among other things, management of difference in multiethnic regions and universities by the year 2009. Ethnolinguistic homogeneity has been very clearly

maintained as the norm of statehood, despite the fact that multiculturalism is allegedly a priority in the agenda of the European Union.

Map 40, which was coauthored by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, provides information on native languages and the religion of the Roma communities in CE. Map 41 depicts place names in CE as written in Silesian. It was made in collaboration with Andrzej (Andreas) Rocznik, one of the first codifiers of the Silesian language.

The last map (42) compares the isomorphism of language, nation, and state in CE on the one hand with the isomorphism of language, nation, and state in East and Southeast Asia on the other, which Kamusella reminds us are the “only two clusters of ethnolinguistic nation-states in the world” (p.176), with the difference that “the former coalesced after 1918, while the latter emerged in the wake of World War Two.”

The Glossary includes short explanations not only of the linguistic terms used in the monograph but also other theoretical, methodological, social, political, cultural, demographic, and legal terms. *Historical Atlas* is certainly a treasure trove of accumulated linguistic, socio-theoretical, historiographical, and geographical knowledge, and it is hard to believe that one man managed to unite all this knowledge in a synthetic overview with a common methodological and theoretical basis of critical sociolinguistic and nationalism studies. Some of the maps, however, can be faulted for a lack of precision or for showing a clear bias towards the argument that Kamusella is striving to present persuasively. Nevertheless, I regard this impressive academic endeavor as a call for dialogical memory and a thorough critical reexamination of European humanistic studies, which to this day remain largely based on national foundations. It should help scholars and curious readers from Central Europe deconstruct the myths that still shape the main ways of thinking and direct political action in the region. In addition, it offers in-depth insights into the emergence and construction of linguistic, national, and political identities from the ninth century to the present day, (re)interpreted through the unusual prism of ethnolinguistic nationalism.

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