

Language Diversity in the Late Habsburg Empire. By Markian Prokopovych, Carl Bethke, and Tamara Scheer. Leiden: Brill, 2020. 268 pp.

This volume about linguistic issues in the late Habsburg monarchy builds on both recent work in nationalism theory and Habsburg historical sociolinguistics. The contributions vary pleasingly in their geographic and methodological focus, yet converge on a few key issues: the influence of nationalist agitation, the role of the state, multilingualism, language shift, and the social domains assigned to different varieties.

Two initial chapters contextualize the volume in various scholarly literatures. The editors' forward provides an excellent historiography while signalling an interest in the everyday practices which the volume's strongest contributions examine. With his customary eloquence, Pieter Judson then considers Habsburg multilingualism in the context of other multilingual states, problematizing traditional assumptions according to which linguistic diversity leads inevitably to national conflict.

The remaining chapters provide the case studies which give the book substance. Csilla Fedinec and István Csernicskó's study of language use in Transcarpathia is the only chapter to betray a nationalist perspective. The authors on three (!) separate occasions claim that the partition of Hungary transformed ethnic Hungarians into "a new minority" in the region (pp.161, 163, 193), even though Magyars have in fact never been Transcarpathia's majority community. Their survey of Transcarpathia's various nationalities treats each in a separate section, thus reifying sharp borders between them. They rely disproportionately on Hungarian-language sources: indeed, their discussion of Rusyns begins with two parish priests who wrote in Hungarian, and thus appear rather unrepresentative of Slavic opinion. Ultimately, the authors contradict themselves, claiming e.g. both that "Hungarian as the language of power did not become prestigious among the local Slavic speakers" (p.190) and that proficiency in Hungarian "was seen as a key to success in life" (p.175); both that "national indifference was also linguistic indifference" (p.193) and that "language has always had a key role in the self-identification process of the nation state and individuals" (p.162). The editors might have done better to have cut this chapter.

Carl Bethke examines the history of Sarajevo's German-language newspaper, the *Bosnische Post*. Bethke describes the newspaper's various editors, their editorial interests, their family lives, and their financial difficulties. Since the newspaper addressed various local constituencies and eschewed nationalism,

Bethke ultimately concludes that “the German-language ... did not ‘belong’ to one group” (p.114). While a respectable contribution to the history of Habsburg journalism, the chapter seems somewhat misplaced in this volume.

The remaining chapters, however, are not only strong, but complement each other. Anamarija Lukić emphasizes local particularism in a study of language use in Osijek, even providing lexical examples of Osijek German. By studying linguistic usage in local newspapers and the theatre, she documents the linguistic shift to Croatian without national triumphalism. Matthäus Wehowski views linguistic issues through the lens of a secondary school in Teschen, examining school yearbooks and considering student enrolments in Czech and Polish classes. Imperial loyalties and the desire for social mobility feature more prominently than nationalist agitation. Wehowski views his narrative as characteristic for borderlands generally, urging “scholars to take a closer look at the periphery” (p.217).

Marta Verginella considers the expansion of Slavic into Trieste, a town which had hitherto balanced Italian and German. Though Italian-speaking elites looked down on Slovene and sought to exclude it, Verginella’s research shows that Slavic increasingly gained ground in legal documents, such as testaments. Though her narrative follows traditional historiographic themes of discrimination and resistance, Verginella’s conclusion emphasizes “the fluidity of ... identities and the fragility of the national historiographical paradigm (p.49).”

While Irina Marin narrowly restricts her attention to four Romanian generals, she compensates for this limited breadth with depth and insight. She shows that her four generals, though loyal to the Habsburg monarch and the Empire as a whole, both formed sophisticated opinions about linguistic issues and engaged in linguistic activism. She finds that they accepted multilingualism and opposed “language hierarchies, whereby one language took precedence over and stifled another,” concluding that such opinions “did not go against the grain of their military standing, but rather were derived organically thereof” (pp.133–34).

In a fascinating study of language use at the urban level, Ágoston Berecz documents the surprising impotence of Hungary’s Magyarization policies. Considering a handful of towns in Transylvania and the Banat, Berecz shows that city governments not only continued using German and Romanian for local business, such as minute-keeping, minor court cases, public notices, and job advertisements, but did so with the tacit approval of central authorities. The surprising and well-documented narrative emphasizes estate hierarchies and social exclusions, but above all the inability of the Magyarizing parliament to

affect local use. Berecz also provocatively contrasts the relatively placid situation in Hungary, where “local governments seldom engaged in symbolic politics” (p.157), with the bitter nationalization of local politics of Cisleithania.

Rok Stergar places the military within the context of local politics, specifically examining the role of the army garrison in Ljubljana. While local patriots became involved in Slavic philological controversies and increasingly sought to promote Slavic even at the expense of German, the city council also sought good relations with the garrison, a source of income for innkeepers, tailors and so forth. Stergar shows that different actors invested linguistic acts with different symbolic meanings, grounding his general points with a variety of illuminating incidents laboriously gathered from an impressively diverse array of sources.

Jan Fellerer’s analysis of language use in Lviv also rests on concrete examples from particular events. Examining transcripts of court cases, he pieces together the linguistic backgrounds of the various litigants, persuasively surmising their various linguistic competencies, the means through which those competencies were achieved, and the social domains in which they were exercised. While a tour-de-force of painstaking and tenacious archival research, Fellerer’s chapter offers relatively meagre conclusions: it “offers glimpses of everyday multilingual practices” (p.242).

Jeroen van Drunen, finally, places his analysis of linguistic usage in Bukovina within a broader historiographical context. Problematizing both popular descriptions of Bukovinians as habitually multilingual and what he calls the “multilingualism-monolingualism dichotomy” (p.246), van Drunen documents language mixing affecting speakers of German, Romanian and Slavic. In a provocative conclusion, Drunen urges scholars to cease viewing languages “as monolithic entities without internal distinctions” (p.267).

The question of borders within languages seems most pressing for the Monarchy’s Slavs. The belief that all Slavs spoke the same language, hegemonic in the early nineteenth century, evidently persisted, since traces of Pan-Slavism appear in several chapters. Yet only Stergar alludes to a transition from “Carniolan Slavic” to “Slovene” (p.53–55). Verginella’s texts often refer to “Slavic,” but Verginella usually glosses such usage as references to “Slovene” (p.31, 34, 35, 43). Wehowski seems baffled by the designation “Czechoslavic” (p.205). Fedinec and Csernicskó mistakenly conflate Pan-Slavism with Russianism (p.194).

The various contributions thus differ widely in their geographic focus, though the volume as a whole curiously neglects Vienna, Budapest and Prague.

The contributions also consider different social domains: schools, courts, the military, journalism, theatre, and different levels of state administration. Methodologically, the articles obviously vary in sophistication, both in relationship to linguistic theory and nationalism studies, but overall the volume reaches a very high standard. This work enhances our knowledge in myriad ways, and will make a welcome contribution to scholarship.

Alexander Maxwell
Victoria University of Wellington