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Tomasz Kamusella’s *Historical Atlas* is a remarkable piece of work. It can be read as a critical intervention against what Kamusella sees as the continued propagation of linguistic myths in Central Europe (pp. xv-xvi). It can also be used as a detailed accompaniment to research, teaching, or sheer interest in the region. The *Historical Atlas* is also a fantastic “coffee table” book in the most complimentary sense of the word. I spent hours perusing the forty-two maps and ancillary material before reading it with the usual outcome-oriented reviewer’s eyes for this review.

Kamusella places his work in a lineage of atlases, though attempts to cartographically frame the wider region of Central Europe (or east-central Europe, Eastern Europe, Central and Eastern Europe) go far beyond the works Kamusella identifies as his intellectual inspirations. During and especially after the First World War, geographers and historians produced large numbers of (historical) atlases in an attempt to fix the map of east-central Europe. Charles Grant Robinson and John George Bartholomew, for instance, teamed up to produce *An Historical Atlas of Modern Europe 1789-1914* (1915). Combining ethnographic maps and maps that charted political changes over centuries, their argument was a thinly veiled attack on *Kleinstaaterei* in south-eastern Europe. Similarly, the medievalist F. J. C. Hearnshaw, in Macmillan’s *Historical Atlas of Modern Europe* (1920), made a powerful yet futile plea for the continuation of empires in east-central Europe in the face of the visceral linguistic mess he depicted on his maps. Kamusella identifies his own indebtedness to Paul Robert Magocsi’s *Historical Atlas of (East) Central Europe* (1993), and it is difficult to escape the obvious influence on the ethos of the maps, the centering of them, and the balance between map and text.

Kamusella is refreshingly open about his agenda. In the introduction—“Languages and I”—he explains his confusion when growing up in Silesia in communist Poland surrounded by multilingualism despite official monolingualism. Kamusella then explains how he managed to overcome his own language barriers by immersing himself in languages in his studies and in his academic career. He resists the whole idea of an *Einzelsprache* and expresses his disappointment at how entrenched this view of languages—from students to Google Translate—has become (pp. 1-3).

What follows is a chronological treatment of different linguistic maps starting in the ninth century. The level of detail is admirable, as is the content detail in the text. The opening map, “Dialectic Continua in Central Europe, Ninth Century” (p. 4),
is striking because it looks like a story of origin: a sea of green—Slavic dialects—dominates the map. Kamusella’s aim is to demolish the ethnolinguistic myth of the *Einzelsprache* by showing that once upon a time there were only dialects and not millennia of unbroken national languages. But there is some essentialism in these early maps. They employ the term “ethnic group,” a term that returns throughout the atlas and is often so vague that it usually serves the purpose of pointing to long-standing homogeneity. Beyond that, it is impossible to ignore the Central European *Selbstverständnis* that the maps, especially the centering of them, exude. And with that Central European assumption comes a degree of nostalgia. Kamusella’s atlas undoubtedly fits in with a longer trend of Central European reflection, which makes it both very attractive to examine and intriguing as a site of memory for a discrete Central European space.

Kamusella links key dates to changes in dialects and languages, and, in the end, to the certainties of official and national languages. The end of the Great Northern War in 1721, for instance, is identified as a turning point as Slavic speakers crowd out Finno-Ugric dialects in the northeast and Turkic dialects from the northern Black Sea (pp. 31-34). The eighteenth century is also crucial for establishing *Einzelsprachen* thanks to printing, the reformation (translation), and a new territoriality (p. 43). The atlas then jumps to the twentieth century (p. 55), and the absence of the period between the partitions of the Poland-Lithuania and the early twentieth century raises some eyebrows. Perhaps Kamusella glosses over too many of the uncertainties and possibilities of that intervening period by claiming that the period was “relatively stable” (p. 55). Equally, the legacy of the 1848 revolutions is a contested one, as recent historiographical debates show; they are not straightforwardly “failures” in that sense. But the maps that follow reveal fascinating pictures that are often overlooked in histories of east-central Europe. Finland’s exceptional linguistic status in the Russian Empire stands out (p. 57), as do the aspirations of polities to fulfill “normative isomorphism,” that is to make language, nation, and state congruous (pp. 64-67). Kamusella’s aim of exposing the oppressive power of nation-states comes full circle here.

The *Historical Atlas* includes maps that are truly eye-opening. Guest contributors Michael Talbot, Agata Reiach, and Walter Żelazny present the map of Central Europe in 1910 in Ottoman Turkish, Yiddish, and Esperanto respectively (pp. 68-81). The maps also include Arabic and Hebrew script. We learn of the undisputed Yiddish names for places like Varshe (Warsaw), Kroke (Kraków), and Brod (Brody) (p. 74). In Esperanto, where a long-standing tradition of naming was absent, Esperantists disagreed on contested place names: Hungarian Esperantists called Bratislava Poţon (Pozsony), German Esperantists Presburgo (Pressburg), and Slovak ones Bratislavo (Bratislava). Even the new universalist language got bogged down in ethnolinguistic partisanship (p. 79).

The more the atlas makes its way into the twentieth century, the more detailed the maps become. A map of short-lived polities from 1908 to 1924 demonstrates the sheer uncertainty around 1910s and 1920s (pp. 84, 85). Then there is the list of minority, regional, and unrecognized languages from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. A historical dimension to the map—when and where they were present in the political-cultural sense—would have added more complexity, but also more detail (pp. 94, 95). And here we also come up against the limits of maps. Kamusella’s atlas is incredibly thorough and detailed, and yet there are always further ways of refining detail. In the village of Méhkerék in the eastern Hungarian county of Békés, there is a historic community of Slovak speakers. In Transylvania and the Romanian Banat, the Transylvanian Saxon and Swabian dialect respectively varies from town to town, sometimes considerably so. Somewhere between Munich and Augsburg villages start speaking Swabian instead of Upper Bavarian. None of this can
really be shown on macroregional maps. Nor do we see, for instance, Vietnamese-speakers in Budapest or English-speakers in Kraków, who are important formative linguistic communities to contemporary east-central Europe. Nor do the maps acknowledge new dialects, such as the Kiezdeutsch German, which is a contemporary dialect in Germany emerging out of the presence of Turkish migrants in urban centers who speak German with an inflection and has now extended beyond Turkish migrant communities to German society more broadly. We also do not see east-central European linguistic communities represented outside of the map in the atlas: that is, Polish-speakers in London (or the UK more generally), Ukrainian-speakers in Canada, Romani dialect continua into other parts of Europe, and many more.

That critique aside, the maps of contemporary Central Europe (usually 2009 as a contemporary marker) engage in novel ways of seeing the region. Kamusella includes a map that indicates Wikipedia languages and dialects beyond the official languages (pp. 156, 157). That map also highlights Google search engine languages, Wikipedia projects, the number of articles, and all against the backdrop of shades of dialect continua. A further map takes note of higher education institutions that teach in a language different from the official state language. Central European University in Budapest still makes it into the atlas albeit with a sense of regret and frustration hanging over the spot on the map (p. 160). Kamusella’s final three maps reveal his ambitions with this atlas: two maps, explained in text by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov (pp. 165-167), show Roma settlements in Central Europe, split into “West” (p. 168) and “East” (p. 169). After that, taking us back to Kamusella’s opening autobiographical remarks about growing up in Silesia, we are treated to a delightful Silesian-language map of Central Europe (p. 170). Between Minszen (Munich), Sofijo (Sofia), and Dancing (Gdańsk), the map looks both familiar and fresh. Finally, Kamusella draws a comparison between normative languages in contemporary Central Europe and East and Southeast Asia (pp. 173-176).

Kamusella’s atlas is the product of extensive work and it is a fantastic read. The lengthy glossary operates as a guide to the maps that are often very detailed. The Historical Atlas will influence seminar teaching. But beyond the obvious teaching relevance, Kamusella’s atlas rekindles a debate about Central Europe, its meaning, and its place. The tantalizing global outlook at the end of the atlas, toward East and Southeast Asia, should encourage a debate about Central Europe, parochialism, globality, and memory. Central Europe may exist more obviously as a memory space in Curitiba or Cleveland, whereas Budapest or Prague reveals other and new layers of linguistic and cultural communities that do not necessary emerge neatly from a Central European historical narrative. Atlases may depict bounded geographies, but they can trigger dynamic conversations.
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