

Yearbook of the Society for 18th Century Studies in South Eastern Europe

Language and Society in 18th-century South Eastern Europe

(edited by Daniela Haarmann and Konrad Petrovsky)

One of the most emphasised characteristics of South Eastern Europe is the complex language situation. Yet, language is seldom an independent topic of historical research, although political, cultural and economic processes of change have always affected language practices. During the 18th century in particular a significant change took place. Throughout the early modern period, language(s) had primarily served as a tool for social distinction, whereas in the course of the 18th century, language(s) became an instrument to define ethnic affiliation or dissociation. This change went along with political or cultural claims such as the acceptance of a single language of state and education or the standardisation of a language of belles-lettres and science. In some cases, similar attempts led to language being written down for the first time at all. With the development of print, the distinction between standard languages and vernaculars or dialects was established more firmly and has served as a stereotypic marker of social and geographic origin until today. Moreover, in common understanding, the usage of a standard language continues to be associated with an urban educated middle-class, while dialects are identified with the rural, less educated populace. The fact that these processes affected only some (language) spaces in South Eastern Europe in the 18th century while others were exposed to them in the 19th or even 20th centuries, already underlines the complexity of the topic.

Our knowledge of language practices and narratives, traditions and innovations continues to be limited to individual linguistic, political or – more rarely – social spaces. For the period under consideration, comprehensive or layered overviews hardly exist. The Yearbook of the Society for 18th Century Studies in South Eastern Europe intends to present in its fourth volume (2020) a cross-section on ‘Language and Society in 18th-century South Eastern Europe’. The volume aims at offering a collection of synoptical and problem-orientated outlines of the language situation in various areas of South Eastern Europe (see below) in order to encourage further research. By deliberately choosing a spatial approach (instead of considering particular languages), we hope to get a better understanding of phenomena like polyglotism, multiliteracy, change of register and social conditions of language use.

Central Aspects:

- Socio-stratospheric overview (e. g.: When did the noblewomen/noblemen speak German, when Croatian? Which language(s) were spoken by the peasantry and which written media were used by townsmen?)
- Language traditions and innovations (e. g.: standardisation of languages, vernaculars and ‘dialects’ vs ‘standard languages’, print languages, ‘national’ languages)
- Cultural, political and situative determinants of language use (e. g.: everyday language, administrative language, educational language)
- Monoglotism and polyglotism in their temporal development
- State of research and research gaps (e. g.: dominant narratives, omissions, distortions etc.)
- Methodical considerations (e. g.: How can language usage be determined, which sources are available)?

The authors are invited to present the current state of knowledge related to the abovementioned aspects while specifically addressing gaps and research deficits. For an example as to how such a complex topic can be approached concisely from a historian’s point of view, see the article of Wladimir Fisch on the language situation in continental Croatian in the 18th century.

Areas (further suggestions are welcome!)

Hungary*, Transylvania, Dalmatia, Civil Croatian/Slavonia, the Aegean space, Central Greek, Macedonia (North and South), Bulgaria, Bosnia, Danubian Pricipalities*, Albania*, ...

* Authors already signaled their interest in working on these regions, which does not preclude additional contributions. Please note that the area to be proposed for discussions should not be anachronistic (such as Romania), but meaningful in the political or cultural context of 18th century South Eastern Europe. Arguably, in some cases, the spatial category is undisputable (like Dalmatia), while in other cases, additional explanations may seem in order (see the introduction in Fischer’s paper to the notion of “inner Croatia”).

Form and Length:

Contributions can be written in English or German and should not exceed 30.000 characters (including spaces, figures and footnotes). The Yearbook will be published at the end of 2020 or early 2021 as an open-access online publication. Potentially, a paper edition might be realisable. We especially encourage young researchers to submit suggestions.

Literature:

Gábor ALMÁSI (Hg.), *Latin at the Crossroads of Identity. The Evolution of Linguistic Nationalism in the Kingdom of Hungary*. Central and Eastern Europe 5. Leiden 2015; Benedict ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London – New York, 2006; Peter BURKE, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*. The 2002 Wiles Lectures given at the Queen’s University, Belfast. Cambridge, 2004; Wladimir FISCHER, „Sprache und soziale Identität im frühneuzeitlichen Binnenkroatien.” *Frühneuzeit-Info* 12.2 (2001): 53–69; Vladislav RJEOUTSKI, Willem FRIJHOFF, *Language Choice in Enlightenment Europe. Education, Sociability, and Governance*, Amsterdam 2018; István Tóth, “Latin as a Spoken Language in Hungary during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”. *CEU History Department Yearbook*, 1998 1997, 93–111.

Who is willing to prepare an article to this yearbook is asked to address to danielahaarmann@jci.at with a subject suggestion.