

REZENSIONEN

DIETER STERN & CHRISTIAN VOSS (eds.): *Marginal Linguistic Identities. Studies in Slavic Contact and Borderland Varieties* (= Eurolinguistische Arbeiten 3). Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden 2006. 274 pp. ISBN 3-447-05354-2.

Marginal Linguistic Identities. Studies in Slavic Contact and Borderland Varieties is a collection of papers presented at the conference on *Language Death and Language Birth on the Margins of the Slavic World* in February 2005 at the Institute for Slavic Studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin. It focuses on processes of language mixing, decay, pidginization and creolization, topics which have been the object of intensive research already in many parts of the world and particularly in former West European colonies in the so-called Third World, where the influence of the languages of the colonizers on the native languages has often resulted in such processes. In the Slavic world, however, these topics have been addressed, if at all, in a somewhat stepmotherly fashion. This relative inattention is due not only to the former inaccessibility of the East Central European countries and the Soviet Union to Western scholars wanting to engage in field work, but also to the rather conservative way scholars in these countries — including, for that matter, Greece — used to deal with language. The ideological equation language/nation/territory, involving a penchant for the purity of the language and the nation, had repercussions on linguistic investigations, resulting in an obvious reluctance to inquire into varieties of linguistic hybridity which, by their very existence, challenge these basic nationalist assumptions. After 1989, however, circumstances rapidly changed. This collection is the result of intense field work undertaken not only by Western, but also by “native” scholars who are obviously open to new approaches.

In addition to presenting about a dozen intriguing and sometimes even entertaining cases (like Nikolaj VAKHTIN’s account of the — imagined — language of the Markovo Old Settlers), *Marginal Linguistic Identities* aims at providing a stimulus to methodological reflection. In his keynote contribution “Contact-Induced Typological Change”, Thomas STOLZ, referring to a number of Asian and American native languages influenced by Spanish and also to Maltese, attempts to make clear what typological change exactly is and links it to the issue of cultural identity, observing that what languages born in language contact situations have in common is “the potential of serving as a symbol for the (perhaps only imagined) new identity of their speakers who feel neither like assimilating completely into the imported culture nor to remaining within the bounds of their traditional one” (p. 29). Or, as Dieter STERN and Christian Voss put it in the “Introduction”, the identities that come into being are “multioptional, fluid identity patterns” which appear “out of disjunctions between past and present” (p. 2) — an approach which is the main thread in most of the contributions. Hybridity is the key word here, but in a critical reflection typical of the spirit of the collection, Sevasti TRUBETA questions the use of the concept “hybridity” in post-colonial discourse and in Southeast European Studies, revealing its “plastic” character and actual meaninglessness. She is right in arguing that even scholars “challenging the traditional claims of homogeneity missed the opportunity to grasp

the factual plurality of alternatives in societal acts by focusing on a restricted sphere of [often rather essentialistically understood ethnic, racial or cultural, R. D.] interaction rather than taking into account societal reality in its entire complexity and contradictory relations" (p. 40–41). Problematising from the very start the notion of hybridity, Trubeta sets the tone for the entire volume. Most of the contributors, it must be said, turn out to be well aware of the "complexity of societal reality".

TRUBETA's concern about scholars equating "categories of analysis" with "categories of practice" is somehow echoed in Voss's reflections on the political and even moral implications of the linguist's work in "Toward the peculiarities of language shift in northern Greece." Concluding that the Slavic spoken in Greek Macedonia is situated between two poles – the position of a threatened language (like the native languages in both Americas) and the position of a European regional language enjoying international support (like Irish and Welsh) –, he interrogates his own task as a researcher, rejecting the role of the linguist as an ethnic entrepreneur and finally agreeing with Salikoko MUFWENE's belief that the rights of languages do not necessarily "prevail over the right of speakers to adapt competitively to their new socio-economic ecologies" (p. 99).

Language contact studies in the Slavic world mostly refer to situations in which Russian, due to its many functions as a state language and as a *lingua communis* in the former Russian Empire and Soviet Union, is the dominating language. In East Central and Southeast Europe, however, Slavic appears historically as the dominated language (dominated by German, Hungarian, Italian, Greek, Turkish). However, after the establishment of the modern East European states in the 19th and early 20th centuries, there are many instances in which the roles are apparently reversed (e.g. German and Hungarian in Czechoslovakia, now Slovakia; Italian in Yugoslavia, now Slovenia and Croatia; Hungarian in the Serbian Vojvodina; Turkish in Bulgaria). The same goes, by the way, for Russian in the Baltic States and in a number of the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia. These latter cases are rather underrepresented in the volume. However, their inclusion would not have substantially changed the general understanding of language mixing as producing a group constituting code that separates bilingual minorities from the "mother-nation" as well as from the majority population and creates a community in its own right whose identity, moreover, is not necessarily related exclusively or even predominantly to language. One article, Eva-Maria STOLBERG's ",Exotic Bodies": Russian anthropology and medicine in 19th century colonial Siberia", deals with the absence of racial prejudices among Russian doctors in Siberia and with their adoption of shamanist healing practices in order to cure aborigines and Russians alike. In addressing the "mixing" of cultural codes and the formation of a local identity, but having nothing to do with linguistics, the inclusion of this article is illustrative of the editors' aim to contribute to "the linguistic de-essentialisation of ethnicity" (p. 3).

Many contributions deal with the issue of language death or (the insufficiency of) language vitality. Not only Voss in the above mentioned article, but also Jörn ACHTERBERG and Marlena POREBSKA in their paper "The Kashubian Ethnolect. Language Obsolescence or Revitalisation?" and Klaus STEINKE in his paper "Zur Vitalität bulgarischer Minderheiten in Rumänien", comment on the criteria defining language vitality and the ways to investigate it. Taking into account "the complexity of societal

reality”, they pay special attention to the objective (socio-economic, demographic and other) living conditions of the speakers of the language variety under scrutiny, the measures taken by the government to protect the minority language, and the subjective attitude of minority language speakers to their idiom. Achterberg and Porębska claim that Kashubian is far more alive now than is generally presumed as a result of the official status it has acquired, government protection, and the ensuing elevation of its prestige in the eyes of its users. According to Steinke, only the archaic Banat Bulgarian has succeeded in more or less maintaining itself, while the small “ordinary” Bulgarian language islands elsewhere in Romania are tending to disappear. The maintenance of the former is due to official protection, the existence of Bulgarian-medium education and in particular to the fact that the Banat Bulgarians distinguish themselves from both Romanians and Bulgarians through their adherence to Roman Catholicism. This adherence has made them an isolated, endogamous community and has contributed to turning their language into a major component of Banat Bulgarian identity. However, since the study of Romanian is compulsory and the (Bulgarian) language taught at school is standard Bulgarian, the Banat Bulgarian “Mikroliteratursprache” is increasingly either affected by standard Bulgarian or steadily shut out by Romanian.

Having studied the domains of Slavic language use and the proficiency continuum of Slavic speakers in Greek Macedonia, Voss focuses on the Greek-Slavic mixed idiom as a means of indexing group boundaries distinguishing Slavic speakers in Greece not only from the Greeks but also from Macedonians and the Bulgarians. In addition, he draws attention to the shifting attitudes — from the perception of provincialism and backwardness to a form of self-awareness and self-esteem — which has been characteristic of this group during the last fifteen years. In all these three cases, a multiplicity of factors appears to have an impact on language vitality and revitalization, which makes it extremely difficult to predict the death or survival of these varieties. In Greek Macedonia, for instance, the number of speakers of the mixed idiom is declining as many of them opt for Greek, while others, encouraged by the nationalistic *Rainbow Party*, attempt to speak the standard language of the Republic of Macedonia.

As a historian, I refrain from pronouncing on the theoretical and methodological aspects of the investigations presented in the volume, but in the same capacity I want to point out the relevance of many of the contributions to a better understanding of historical and political developments. Not surprisingly, in Eastern Europe the “orthodoxy of the language/culture/(ethnic) identity link” (p. 4, quoting O'REILLY) has also remained virtually unchallenged in historical research. In addition, local historians are traditionally rather reluctant to apply a multidisciplinary approach, involving for instance anthropology and sociolinguistics, which before long would problematize the abovementioned tripartite link. However, an historian interested in investigating the past “from below” might benefit a lot from many of the contributions in this volume. In “Collective identity formation and linguistic identities in the Austro-Italian-Slovene border region”, for instance, Robert Garry MINNICH compares collective identity formation among the “Slovene” population in two villages in adjacent Alpine valleys. Once they both belonged to the Habsburg Empire; since the end of World War I they have been separated by the Austro-Italian border. Ugovizza/Ukve

is in Italy, Achomitz-Freistritz an der Gail/Zahomec-Ziljska Bistrica is in Austria. Minnich explains the striking differences in (ethnic/national) self-perception and in attitudes vis-à-vis the local dialect/standard Slovenian in the two communities, taking into account a whole range of factors which range from differences in local agricultural practices (like transhumance in Ugovizza) to the impact of state ideologies (like the promotion of a *Windisch* identity in interwar Austria). While in Achomitz the use of Slovenian currently seems considerably politicized — speaking standard Slovenian in the presence of non-Slovenians is considered a “declaration” — the isolated Ugovizza gives us a glimpse of what might have been the relations between people in a (socially homogenous) multi-ethnic community in the pre-national(ist) era. This perception, however, might be misleading as the situation in Ugovizza can be partly explained with reference to the lack of any state supported cultural institutions for the Slovenian minority in that part of Italy, in contrast to the situation in Austrian Carinthia.

Tanja PETROVIĆ's article “Language ideologies in contact: The case of refugees from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Serbia” presents us with a situation in which language is completely identified with ethnic/national identity and has actually become a shibboleth. In the past there were no salient linguistic differences between speakers of Štokavian of whatever nationality (Bosniak, Croat or Serb) living in the same region and sharing the same dialect. Since the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, however, people there have become extremely sensitive to phonetic and lexical particularities and their attitudes towards linguistic features express their segregationist attitude towards each other. In addition, according to Petrović, “the decision of refugees to stick to their native idiom or to switch to that of the majority in their new setting” can be interpreted as “a symbolic act of expressing agreement or disagreement with the status the majority assigns to them” (p. 268). Remarkably, refugees also transfer the language ideology prevailing in the state they voluntarily or forcibly left. A Serb from Croatia now living in Serbia, having ‘inherited’ the Croat purist language policy, insists that his co-nationals avoid words that are not of Serb, but of Turkish origin, in spite of the tolerance to borrowings typical of Serbian.

Marginal Linguistic Identities is a book whose significance exceeds that of a collection of linguistic studies. On a purely informative level, it contains articles that will be of interest to the historian and the political scientist. On a theoretical level, it rightly challenges not only the linguistic essentialism of even contemporary approaches to ethnicity, but also the predominantly ethnic interpretation of identity itself.

Gent

RAYMOND DETREZ

ALEKSANDR I. FALILEEV: *Vostočnye Balkany na karte Ptolemeja. Kritiko-bibliografické izyskanija* [Der Ost-Balkan auf der Karte des Ptolemäus. Kritisch-bibliographische Untersuchungen]. Biblion: München 2006 (= Studien zum Südosteuropasprachatlas, 5). 167 S. ISBN 3-932331-57-5.

Klaudios PTOLEMAIOS (lat. PTOLEMAEUS, etwa 90–168 u.Z.) gilt als einer der wichtigsten Wissenschaftler der ausgehenden Antike. Neben zahlreichen anderen Werken