

LANGUAGES AND CULTURE IN HISTORY



Edited by Willem Frijhoff, Marie-Christine Kok Escalle,  
and Karène Sanchez-Summerer

# Multilingualism, Nationhood, and Cultural Identity

Northern Europe 16th-19th Centuries

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

## Multilingualism, Nationhood, and Cultural Identity

# Languages and Culture in History

This series studies the role foreign languages have played in the creation of the linguistic and cultural heritage of Europe, both western and eastern, and at the individual, community, national or transnational level.

At the heart of this series is the historical evolution of linguistic and cultural policies, internal as well as external, and their relationship with linguistic and cultural identities.

The series takes an interdisciplinary approach to a variety of historical issues: the diffusion, the supply and the demand for foreign languages, the history of pedagogical practices, the historical relationship between languages in a given cultural context, the public and private use of foreign languages – in short, every way foreign languages intersect with local languages in the cultural realm.

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Translations into English were made possible by the generous support of the G.Ph. Verhagen Stichting, Rotterdam, Bettina Brandt as translator and Mary Robitaille-Ibbett as translator and corrector.

Cover illustration: *Erasmus en Rumi*, Erasmusstraat 137 in Rotterdam, by Ahmad Reza Haraji, 2008.

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

Amsterdam University Press English-language titles are distributed in the US and Canada by the University of Chicago Press.

ISBN 978 94 6298 061 7

e-ISBN 978 90 4853 000 7

DOI 10.5117/9789462980617

NUR 616 / 695

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# Languages and Culture in History

A New Series

*Willem Frijhoff, Marie-Christine Kok Escalle, and Karène Sanchez-Summerer*

Frijhoff, Willem, Marie-Christine Kok Escalle, and Karène Sanchez-Summerer (eds.), *Multilingualism, Nationhood, and Cultural Identity: Northern Europe 16th-19th Centuries*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017.

DOI: 10.5117/9789462980617/INTRO

Language variety has played an important, even an essential role in the creation of the cultural heritage of Europe, and indeed of the world as a whole. Admittedly, linguistic unity as a basis for universal understanding is one of the oldest dreams of humankind, expressed in the biblical myth of the Tower of Babel, and the repeated attempts throughout the centuries to create a universal language, not to speak of the pretensions of some major languages to embody universal values, from Latin, French and Spanish to (American) English or Mandarin Chinese. Yet linguistic variety is the rule and the background of such dreams. Ever since the actual appropriation of languages by nations, states or political regimes, many centuries ago, languages have been identified as 'vernacular', 'domestic', 'regional' or 'national', owned by specific social groups and cultural communities. They distinguish themselves from 'foreign' languages or idioms used by speakers who do not belong to the in-group of native speakers and those who have joined them in the course of history. The distinction between 'own'/'native' and 'foreign'/'acquired' has no linguistic foundation, but is of a social and cultural nature. This distinction is at the basis of the series on languages and culture in history inaugurated by this volume.

The scope of this series is to explore the multifarious relations between language and culture in history. Some definitions are required. In this series, we will consider language in its very broad definition as a tool, system and symbolic form of communication among persons, communities and peoples. However, there are hundreds of definitions of culture. Taken broadly, they all amount to one general conception, worded as follows by the cultural historian



Peter Burke in a definition that has acquired authority among historians: culture is ‘a system of shared meanings, attitudes and values, and the symbolic forms (performances, artefacts) in which they are expressed or embodied’<sup>1</sup> In this broad, social and societal sense, recognizing formally its symbolic expressions, culture goes well beyond the traditional normative or aesthetic conception and applies to the larger field of social and cultural anthropology. In a discussion of the role of language in history, Graham Dunstan Martin has called this the *socioculture* as opposed to the *value culture*.<sup>2</sup> In this series, the perspective on culture is therefore that of a mode of historical discourse rather than that of culture as a product or an object. We understand culture as a universe of social and cultural practices, ideas, symbols and values, and of the forms, ways and moments of their appropriation, that continually develops through agency, negotiation and representation, and may tend either towards unity and unification or towards variety and distinction.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, the study of languages and culture in history must be distinguished from historical linguistics, considered as a scholarly discipline in its own right with its own object, theoretical foundations, methods and discourse.<sup>4</sup> In our view, historical sociolinguistics is a neighbouring and sometimes overlapping field that has developed during the last two decades as a branch of general sociolinguistics, which is some decades older.<sup>5</sup> However, our purpose is wider ranging. Our field of enquiry encompasses not only the literary studies that have been its privileged object ever since the rise of historical sociolinguistics, but culture in the broadest possible sense. It is true that, in recent decades, historians and historical sociolinguists have started to speak to each other. Predecessors in linguistics, such as the late Joshua A. Fishman (1926–2015) or Richard W. Bailey (1939–2011),

1 Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978; 3rd ed. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), xi; see the variants in Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).

2 Graham Dunstan Martin, *The Architecture of Experience: A Discussion of the Role of Language and Literature in the Construction of the World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 135–166.

3 This definition has been at the basis of the research initiative Cultural Dynamics, conducted by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, ongoing since 2007. Accessible at the Cultural Dynamics website, <<http://www.nwo.nl/en/research-and-results/programmes/gw/cultural-dynamics/index.html>>. See also Willem Frijhoff, *Dynamisch erfgoed* (Amsterdam: SUN, 2007).

4 For the different approaches taken by historical sociolinguistics, see Terttu Nevalainen, ‘What Are Historical Sociolinguistics?’, *Journal of Historical Sociolinguistics*, 1/2 (2015), 243–269.

5 Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy & Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre (eds.), *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

and present-day cultural historians such as Peter Burke have made seminal contributions to the development of these interdisciplinary encounters.<sup>6</sup>

However, despite the repeatedly sung praise of their works, they have in fact generated few followers. In past and current historiography, the social history of language is mostly either 'social' in the strong sense of the word, which is an easier option than the sociocultural approach, or focused on literary sources, thus benefiting from a long tradition of textual scholarship. Much has already been written about language policy in the past, about the codes and rules of social groups, much less about the penetration of language into the very way of dealing with life and reality in history. Therefore, the object of this series concerns essentially language as a tool of the cultural universe, high and low, native and foreign, elitist and everyday taken together, used by individuals, groups or communities. This includes, of course, the fields of study mentioned above, but its purpose is to go beyond whenever possible. The volumes we welcome in this series should not simply use sociolinguistic paradigms and their application to historical contexts, or only those of linguistics itself, of dialectology and pragmatics. They should also focus on linguistic import and export, on the impacts and spread of language, on the historical reconstruction of past language use and valuation, not to mention multilingualism in history which, as a substantial dimension of past cultures, is one of the topics of this first volume.

We must avoid still another misunderstanding. Indeed, the so-called 'linguistic turn' in the historical discipline itself – inaugurated by theoretical historians such as Hayden White, and involving for instance linguistic change (Reinhart Koselleck) or linguistic contextualism (Quentin Skinner) – is much more about discourse on history than about the use and perception of language.<sup>7</sup> Of course, all historical writing involves language as a social and cultural tool and expression. However, it is normally concerned more

6 See, for instance: Joshua A. Fishman, *Language in Sociocultural Change* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972); Richard W. Bailey, *Images of English: A Cultural History of the English Language* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991); Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, 2002 Wiles Lectures (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), particularly the 'Prologue: Communities and Domains', 1–14; Peter Burke & Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (eds.), *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). As a theme of European cultural history, language was put on the agenda as early as 1988: Willem Frijhoff, 'Langues nationales, langues de contact, langues de culture', in *Europe sans rivage: Symposium international sur l'identité culturelle européenne, Paris, janvier 1988* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1988), 76–83. See also the essays in this volume.

7 See Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (London: Wesleyan University, 1997); Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Kaya