

FOLKLORE, ETHNOLOGY, PHILOLOGY: NATIONAL SCIENCES AND GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Folklore and ethnology were from their beginnings closely associated with language. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz used languages to identify and categorise peoples, and he influenced the German-speaking scholars who coined the earliest ethnological terms, the first of which came in the 1740s. Largely through Johann Gottfried Herder's writings, from the late 18th century the idea of the *Volksgeist* helped to valorise language and popular traditions as authentic markers of cultural distinctiveness. With the 19th-century development of the comparative historical study of languages, especially Indo-European and Uralic, the possibility appeared of positing much deeper historical origins for modern European nations, above all for those nations whose written histories began in relatively recent times. As it developed within the German university system in the course of the 19th century philology encompassed not just language and literature but mythology, folk traditions, law, medicine and history, all understood in relation to German culture as a whole. As folklore studies were professionalised and institutionalised, 'national' folklore studies tended to be largely defined by the extent of a distinct language, while dialect studies frequently drew on folk traditions to give representative examples of localised speech using storytellers as privileged informants – as we show in the case of Irish dialectology.

KEYWORDS: folklore • ethnology • philology • history • nationalism

In his famous essay from 1882, "What Is a Nation?" (*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*), Ernest Renan (1823–1892) wrote: "I like ethnography very much, and find it a peculiarly interesting science. But as I wish it to be free, I do not wish it to be applied to politics." (Renan 1995: 150) The works on early Christianity of the celebrated French scholar, briefly Professor of Hebrew at the Collège de France, were very influential, but Renan acknowledged in his notes and correspondence that philology – in this case the study of scripture – had turned him away from the faith of his Breton youth (Kselman 2018: 254). The loss of Alsace-Lorraine following France's defeat in 1870–1871 weighed on his mind. The region was annexed by the victorious Germans, in whose country philology had become a 'national science'. For Renan a nation should not be defined *a priori* by

language, race, religion or geography, but by the will of its inhabitants: its very existence was “a daily plebiscite” (Renan 1995: 154).¹

Language, in essence the basis for the German claim to Alsace-Lorraine, can be perceived as an impenetrable barrier between peoples and nations, though in practice it is often overcome by the bilingualism of border regions or by the use of *lingua franca*s. Resemblances between neighbouring languages and dialects are often unremarkable and easily noted. French speakers of the northern dialects of *langue d’oil* or the southern ones of *langue d’oc* were well aware of such resemblances if they travelled any distance, but also – depending on proximity – of the affinity of their speech to the Italian and Catalan dialects spoken on French territory. Danes, Norwegians and Swedes, or Poles, Czechs and Slovaks, can communicate with each other using their own languages in what is called receptive multilingualism. The existence of transitional dialects, different to the state language, often plays an important role, the evidence of an earlier dialect continuum (for example the Low Saxon dialects spoken on both sides of the Dutch–German border). Even in the case of languages without mutual intelligibility, salient similarities make speakers aware of underlying relationships: English and Dutch, German and Danish, West Slavic (Czech, Slovak, Polish) and South Slavic (Slovene, Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, Macedonian, Bulgarian).

These are all languages spoken in greater or lesser proximity to one another and the events that explained their current distribution were usually a matter of recorded history (for example the migrations of the Germanic and Slavic peoples). Similarities between more distant languages, on the other hand, raised new, more tantalising, questions. Relationships between the Uralic languages were proposed by scholars from the 16th and 17th centuries. In *Demonstratio: Idioma Hungarorum et Lapporum idem esse* (1770) the Hungarian Jesuit János Sajnovics (1733–1785) proved the relationship between the languages of two very different peoples, the Hungarians, organised in a powerful aristocratic society in central Europe, and the Sami, a marginalised indigenous population at the northern extremity of Europe.² Western Europeans had direct contact with India at least from 1498, when Vasco da Gama set foot there during his circumnavigation of the globe, and similarities between Sanskrit and Italian were already noted in the 16th century. The French Jesuit Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux (1691–1779) in 1767 demonstrated the relationship of Sanskrit to Greek and Latin, though his observations were not published until much later, and in 1786 the British philologist and judge Sir William Jones (1746–1794) brought the relationship to a wider scholarly public.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) seems to have been the first to use language to categorise peoples and to understand language in this way as a historical source for investigating national origins. In his correspondence with Peter the Great he encouraged the study of the languages of the Russian Empire and was influential in the organisation of the Russian Academy of Sciences and in the brief for the scientific missions that it dispatched from the early 18th century to study the empire’s newly conquered territories and their inhabitants. As Han Vermeulen demonstrates (2015 and 2019), ethnology originated in the work of such scientific missions through collaboration of Russian scientists and enlightened administrators with German-speaking scholars influenced by Leibniz. A range of terms for the cultural description of peoples appeared from 1740, beginning with *Völker-Beschreibung*, and, between the 1760s and the 1780s, included *Ethnographia*, *Völkerkunde*, *Volkskunde* and *Ethnologia*. The key figure was the

German historian Gerhard Friedrich Müller (1705–1783), who participated in Russian scientific expeditions and coined *Völker-Beschreibung* on the second Kamchatka expedition. His ideas were brought back to the German-speaking countries where ethnology was conceptualised and later consolidated in centres of learning in the Holy Roman Empire. In both empires, the Russian and the Habsburg, the diversity of the inhabitants – administratively classified into ethnographic communities by their languages – was of significant political and scientific interest.³

If the coining of *Volkskunde* can be traced to this scientific context, its development was “directly linked to the idea of the [German] nation-state in nineteenth-century central Europe” (Brückner 1987: 224). From the early 18th century several German intellectuals – Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Wilhelm Humboldt (1767–1835) and others – had insisted on an intimate relationship between language and nation at a time when Germans were divided between a plethora of different states. In 1846 Jacob Grimm wrote to the King of Denmark – who ruled Schleswig-Holstein, much of it German-speaking – calling for the recognition of German-speakers as naturally belonging to the German nation (Coulmas 2016: 133).⁴ In an 1858 speech Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl (1823–1897), a key figure in the establishment of German folklore studies, argued that a people (*Volk*) was constituted as a distinct unit essentially by *Stamm* (tribe), *Sitte* (custom), *Siedlung* (settlement) and *Sprache* (language) (Groth 2015: 26). Using language to define the nation thus had obvious political implications, not least in terms of state boundaries, and this was where German ethnolinguistic nationalism came face to face with the French civic nationalism of Renan.

Philology can be defined as a form of textual scholarship. Concentrating on the analysis of foundational works of Western civilisation, the classics and the Bible, from the Renaissance it was central to humanistic intellectual enquiry. From the early 19th century, a comparative historical method was developed in philology, to a large extent the work of the Germans Franz Bopp (1791–1867), Jacob Grimm (1785–1863), Friedrich Diez (1794–1876) and others. Comparative philology involved comparing the related languages that came to be referred to as ‘Indo-European’ – the term in English dates from around 1814 – in order to reconstruct the putative language from which they all supposedly derived along with its development and diffusion. The same principle motivated the study of dialect (Hickey 2018: 28). The impact of this kind of comparative linguistics was great. According to the Sanskritist and scholar of religion Max Müller (1823–1900), “all the sciences connected with the study of language, like mythology, ethnology and archaeology, have taken quite a new turn” (Müller 1847: 323).

Claudine Gauthier (2013: 32) argues that in the German university system philology was formed in competition with philosophy and asserted itself through an equally totalising perspective. Hence, from the beginning German philology included not just language and literature but also mythology, folk traditions, law, medicine and history, understanding them in terms of the totality of culture. *Volkskunde* – German folklore studies – developed as “a child of ... philological Germanistics (*Deutschtumswissenschaft*)” (Brückner 1987: 224) and folklorists were philologically trained “in the rigour of the historical comparative method” (Gauthier 2013: 32). Language helped to establish the parameters of the field. Dialect and the linguistic specificities of rural cultures – “dialectological works with ethnological foci” – remained integral parts of the German folkloristic research field until well into the 20th century (Groth 2015: 24–25, 28).

Folklore studies, especially the study of folktales and their origins, were strongly influenced by Indo-European philology. Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859) argued that folktales were inherited from a common Indo-European antiquity and hence were found in regions in which Indo-European languages were spoken (Thompson 1977: 371). Theodor Benfey (1809–1881) thought that the more elaborate folktales, especially the *Märchen* or tales of magic, had spread from India. His theories of a Eurasian transmission were especially influential in Russia. (Espagne 2010: 493–496) Nearly a century later the French scholar Georges Dumézil (1898–1986) described how an ideology inherited from the prehistoric Indo-Europeans led to the development of a tripartite hierarchical social organisation with functions devoted respectively to sovereignty and the sacred, to warfare, and to sustenance. The evidence for this he discerned in the mythology of various Indo-European-speaking peoples. (See Demoule 2014: 469–504.)

In Europe the classical inheritance favoured southern nations, especially Greece and the Romance-speaking countries, providing them with a noble origin and an abundance of historical evidence for their past. This was one reason why the Renaissance – a renewal of classical models – had less resonance north of the Alps and why in the second half of the 18th century there should be such German enthusiasm for the poems of Ossian, the ‘Homer of the North’. Some nations had their origins in medieval dynastic states and could show an impressive longevity from then to the present day. Other nations were not so well favoured. For Germans or for Italians in much of the 19th century the absence of a national state was seen as evidence of a decline that had to be redressed through the ‘re-unification’ of the sundered parts of the historic nation. Many peoples had no history of a state of their own. Without a state, could a people then have a history? Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) did not think so, nor did Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), for whom those peoples who had been and would remain incapable of creating a state were fated to be no more than “ethnographic monuments” (Nimni 1991: 26–27). This idea has been surprisingly long lasting. Writing in 1963 the unionist historian of Ireland James Camlin Beckett (1912–1996) found in the absence of political cohesion and continuity that the thread of Irish history “was supplied by the ‘land’, which influenced the careers of settlers and natives alike” (Bourke 2016: 2–3), a perspective not shared by nationalists, who saw an unbroken, if repressed, national tradition from medieval times. In a very different geographical context Partha Chatterjee (1999: 168) was to argue that the historiography of India was based on the premise that “all evidence that did not fit into the linear order of progression of state forms defined by principalities, kingdoms, and empires was relegated to the exotic, timeless domain of Indian ethnology”.

Old nations had advantages over new or aspiring nations since they had cultural capital, especially in the form of an accumulation of canonical writings in long-established literary languages. Pascale Casanova (2011: 123–125) argues that the development of national movements in the 19th century involved “a symbolic assertion of equality between the various national collectivities”, but that in fact nations were not equal insofar as an acknowledged cultural heritage was concerned. Ethnic groups without a state or ruled by a minority of a different ethnic origin had few opportunities to build such a cultural heritage. Oskar Kallas (1868–1946), the first professionally trained Estonian folklorist, in 1911 justified the interest of ethnic Estonians in their neglected heritage: “We have been told: we are nothing, we possess nothing. And it has been

explained to us so thoroughly that even we ourselves believe it..." (Kannike 1994: 21) Herder had challenged the very notion of a great tradition by asserting that nations were equal in the national-popular⁵ traditions that were at the root of their cultural and historical development. By finding artistic creativity in the *Volksgeist*, he "shattered all the hierarchies" (Casanova 2004: 76–77), offering a revolutionary resource to writers who had no native literary models of their own. The collection, editing and publishing of poetry and folktales gathered from oral tradition thus "became the first quantifiable resource of a nascent literary space" (ibid.: 224–225).

In 1836, a year after the publication of Elias Lönnrot's (1802–1884) epic poem, Johan Gabriel Linsén (1785–1848), chairman of the Finnish Literature Society, stated "that on the basis of the *Kalevala*, Finland could now say: 'I too have a history!'" (Wilson 1976: 41–42). Three years later the Estophile Georg Schultz-Bertram (1808–1875) asked the Estonian Learned Society: "How, then, can our society foster the enlightenment and the spiritual rebirth of a nation that has been freed from serfdom [between 1816 and 1819] and declared of age but that nevertheless suffers from its own sheepishness and despondency?" His answer was "Let us give the people an *epic* and a *history* and everything is won!" (Hasselblatt 2016: 26). In both cases the epics *Kalevala* and *Kalevipoeg*, which became foundational texts of national cultures, were drawn from oral tradition.

If oral traditions could compensate for a lack of native written sources in investigating an ancient national history, philology pushed this history much further back.⁶ The origins of northern European peoples were seemingly lost in a dim and illegible past until Indo-European philology helped to give them, and Germanic peoples in particular, a deeper and more ancient history that put them on a par with the classical world: "Germans were relieved of the need to compete with the Greeks and the Romans, for they now discovered themselves part of the same primordial group" (Lincoln 1999: 55). In a somewhat similar way, Lithuanians, whose language was first written in the 16th century, took pride in its exceptional conservatism, a 'daughter of Sanskrit' that gave the Lithuanians a much deeper history stretching back millennia.

The Finnish scholar Matthias Alexander Castrén (1813–1852) used his pioneering research into Uralic languages in the same way as the German philologists did with Indo-European. He "wanted to find, and believed he had found at least as great a kindred and as glorious traditions for the small, remote Finnish nation as any scholars of Indo-European languages had done in their own sphere" (Hautala 1968: 48). In 1851 he was appointed first professor of Finnish language and literature at the University of Helsinki. His duties included teaching the language, literature and ethnology of the Finns and related peoples, domains that continued to be associated with the chair until 1892, when a separate chair of Finno-Ugric languages was established. In his inaugural lecture, he spoke about ethnology as "a science which deals with the religion, social conditions, customs and traditions of nations" and that it could be considered "as a part of cultural history, but not all nations have a history in the highest sense of the word – it is this very study, ethnology, which constitutes their history" (Vuorela 1977: 20).

Since the Finns did not belong to a long-established nation with an old literary language and high culture, comparative philology helped to compensate for the lack of historical evidence for the deep Finnish past. An awareness of Finland's closeness to western European cultural patterns (shaped to a large extent by the legacy of Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism) and their greater distance from most other Finnic-speak-

ing peoples (who were mainly Russian Orthodox⁷) encouraged elements of the Finnish intelligentsia to see themselves as playing a leading role among their kindred peoples. Despite the importance of Sajnovics and Gyarmathi in establishing the basis for the study of Uralic languages, the Hungarians, who belonged to a long-established nation with its own state traditions and an old literary language, “did not look with pleasure at the ‘primitive’ kinship that its nearest linguistic relatives, the Ob-Ugrians,⁸ seemed to offer (the phrase ‘kinship smelling of fish’ was repeatedly used)” (Saarinen 2001: 43). In a not dissimilar way European fascination with Indian origins was tempered by the application of negative stereotypes to contemporary Indians. M. Müller (1847: 348–349) wrote of English soldiers, supposed descendants of the ancient Aryans “to which the first conquerors and masters of India belonged”, returning to India “to accomplish the glorious work of civilization, which had been left unfinished by their Arian brethren”. If the civilisation of Aryan Vedic India was greatly admired, modern India was backward in the opinion of European observers. Edward Said (1985: 99) commented that “the ‘good’ Orient was invariably a classical period somewhere in a long-gone India, whereas the ‘bad’ Orient lingered in present-day Asia, parts of North Africa, and Islam everywhere”.

If comparative philology helped to provide nations with deeper national histories, it also led to the origins of oral traditions being traced back as far back as those of the languages in which they were told. Indeed the Italian folklorist Raffaele Corso (1923: 20) (1885–1965) characterised folklore as a “contemporary prehistory”.⁹ Similar conclusions were drawn by Irish scholars. Douglas Hyde (1890: xix) (1860–1949) distinguished in the Irish tale repertoire between “bardic inventions” – of literary origin – and “old Aryan traditions”, arguing that

of all the traces that man in his earliest period has left behind him, there is nothing except a few drilled stones or flint arrow-heads that approaches the antiquity of these tales, as told today by a half-starving peasant in a smoky Connacht cabin (ibid.: xli).

Séamus Ó Duilearga (James Hamilton Delargy, 1899–1980), director of the Irish Folklore Commission, noting the Celtic scholar Kuno Meyer’s (1858–1919) characterisation of medieval Irish literature as “the earliest voice from the dawn of West European civilization”,¹⁰ added that in Irish folklore were “echoes out of the vast silence of a still more ancient time, of which hitherto the archaeologist has been the only chronicler” (Delargy 1945: 178).

Celtic philology from its beginnings showed an interest in folklore as exemplified by the frequent contributions on the subject in the first journals of Celtic philology, *Revue celtique*, founded in 1870, and *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*,¹¹ in 1897. In France, where *Revue celtique* was published, the relationship between philology and folklore studies was more complicated than in Germany (see Gauthier 2013). The purpose of the Parisian Société de linguistique founded in 1863 was the study of languages and of “legends, traditions, customs, documents” that could illuminate “ethnographic science” (ibid.: 42). Since it was formed in reaction to the Société d’anthropologie (1859), which considered linguistics to be a branch of physical and biological anthropology, it specifically prohibited “any communication concerning either the origin of language, or the creation of a universal language” (ibid.). Intensified suspicion of Germany after

the war of 1870–1871 resulted in a rejection of German philology. Since the recognition of the Société de linguistique as being of public utility involved financial benefits, it was forced to change its statutes in 1876 to remove folklore from its remit, limiting itself to “the study of languages and the history of language” with all other subjects prohibited (ibid.: 43). This led to Henri Gaidoz (1842–1932) leaving the society and, with Eugène Rolland (1846–1909), founding the folklore journal *Méluſine: Recueil de mythologie, littérature populaire, traditions et usages* in 1878.

Gaidoz particularly exemplifies the close relationship between the two fields. He, Rolland and Gaston Paris (1839–1903) were the key figures in establishing folklore studies in France. Gaidoz and Paris had both studied in Germany with Friedrich Diez (1794–1876), the founder of Romance philology, while Rolland was one of the first students of the École pratique des hautes études, where he studied German-style philology. Gaidoz believed that the Celts were very important in the formation of western Europe and he resolved to establish Celtic Studies on a scientific basis, founding *Revue celtique*, the first journal of Celtic studies. In 1872 Paris and Paul Meyer founded *Romania*, a journal of Romance philology, especially of the medieval period, which nevertheless intentionally gave space in its pages to the study of modern dialects and folklore, above all during the six-year hiatus between the publication of the first and second volumes of *Méluſine*.

The historical frame of philology meant that dialectology too “has tended to be allied with historical linguistics” and has thus “sought to describe maximally localized and conservative forms of speech which can usefully be compared with earlier stages of the language” (Ó Sé 2008: 96–97). Much the same applied to folklore studies and led in the same way to the privileging of elderly informants, understood as the last link of an ancient chain of transmission. Ó Duilearga (1948: xxii) exemplified this perspective when he wrote of the elderly Irish-speakers of the west of Ireland: “When they are dead that will be the end of the Middle Ages in Western Europe, and the chain that is still a link between this generation and the first people who took possession of Ireland will be broken.”

The first major study of an Irish dialect was by Franz Nikolaus Finck (1867–1910), later professor of general linguistics at the University of Berlin, who spent four months in the Aran Islands learning Irish between 1894 and 1895. Though his *Die araner Mundart: Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der Westirischen* (2 vols., 1899), the first monograph devoted to an Irish dialect, did not include folklore texts, Finck had learnt spoken Irish from the storyteller Máirtín Neile Ó Conghaile (c. 1826–1904). Holger Pedersen (1867–1953), later professor of comparative linguistics at the University of Copenhagen, in 1893 went to study Albanian. Meeting a storyteller, he set about recording his oral traditions, and published them in *Albanische Texte mit Glossar* (Leipzig 1895) along with a later German translation *Zur albanesischen Volkskunde* (Copenhagen 1898) that included folktales, riddles, beliefs and songs. Pedersen went to Aran in autumn 1895 and stayed until the beginning of 1896, working extensively with Ó Conghaile and recording some 350 pages from oral dictation, mainly folktales (Munch Pedersen 1994).

Most Irish dialect studies followed this pattern. Heinrich Wagner’s *Linguistic Atlas and Survey of Irish Dialects* (4 vols., 1958–1969) was based on a list of questions, containing over 2,000 items derived from the linguistic atlas of Swiss German (Hotzenköcherle 1962–1997).¹² The informants were native speakers of Irish or at least had spoken it in their youth – an extensive language shift had been on-going since the late 18th cen-

tury – and the questions mainly asked about traditional rural life. Consisting of an atlas and a volume dedicated to each of the three main dialects giving the responses to the questionnaire, the work included folklore texts, i.e. mainly proverbs, songs and tales. Many of Wagner's informants were already well-known to folklorists. His fourth volume (1969), co-edited with Colm Ó Baoill, was dedicated to the dialects of Ulster and the Isle of Man and included some Scottish Gaelic material. The inclusion of the different, if closely related, languages of Manx and Scottish Gaelic in Wagner's work on Irish dialects shows another obvious aspect to language research. The core of Celtic Studies is language and medieval literature, with a lesser focus on modern literatures, archaeology and folklore. With folklore studies, the closest Celtic relationships have been between Scotland and Ireland with a major point of contact in the Ossianic or Fenian tradition shared through the closely related languages. One incidental aspect of Pan-Gaelic cooperation was, as a result of a visit by the Irish prime minister Éamon de Valera, the sending of a mobile recording unit from the Irish Folklore Commission to the Isle of Man in 1948 in order to record some of the last speakers of Manx (van der Heide 2022).

It is natural that Celtic philology would bring Welsh students to Scotland or Irish students to Wales, and such connections have been of scholarly importance and have led to formal institutional links and often abiding friendships. The same applies to Finno-Ugric philology. If there was no irredentist dimension to Irish interest in Gaelic Scotland and the Isle of Man, the claim of the Irish government to Northern Ireland (renounced in 1998), while not directly based on linguistic criteria, did rest on claims of an all-Ireland historical and cultural identity, and the role of the Irish language itself has been politicised in Northern Ireland. The political dimension to language interest is, of course, well known. Movements or intellectual tendencies based on linguistic affiliation – Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, Turanianism, Scandinavianism, etc. – have at times been politically significant. The Estonian folklorist Oskar Loo (1900–1961) worked extensively among the Finno-Ugric Livonians in Latvia and his advocacy for them and criticism of state policies led to him being declared *persona non grata* by the Latvian government in 1935 and deported in 1937 (*New York Times* 1937; Västriik 2005: 205). Language was used as a justification by irredentist elements, which included folklorists, in Finland before and during the Second World War, in particular with regard to Russian Karelia, the indigenous language of which is closely related to Finnish and where the bulk of the materials for *Kalevala* were collected (see Wilson 1976).

From the 1960s and 1970s, folklore studies began a gradual move away from notions of traditional rural society – in decline everywhere in Europe and North America – and towards the study of current forms of vernacular culture. A distinction became clear between more historically oriented research, focused largely on residual aspects of traditional rural culture and on archives, and contemporary questions. This often involved a focus less on community than on personal agency and less on (collective) tradition than on (individual) performance. In the same way ethnological interest was in places transformed, broadening its remit from the collection and description of peasant artifacts to what Lauri Honko (1991: 42–47) had called the “second life of folklore” and to questions of consumption in modern societies and to other aspects of contemporary life. These changes occurred above all in North America and in central and northern Europe, but their implications gradually made themselves felt beyond these regions, not least in the form of new research questions.

The new notion of European ethnology was one response to these changes, indicating a transnational focus (encouraged by the broadening and deepening of the European Union), the gradual adoption of methods borrowed from the social sciences (often, it must be said, to the neglect of established research traditions) and the problematisation of the notion of national culture. Of course, these changes were felt in different ways. The importance of cultural specificity returned for very different reasons, regionally in the form of a new salience for national culture from the 1990s in the countries of central and eastern Europe released from Moscow's embrace, and globally in the form of the various UNESCO declarations, recommendations and conventions on cultural diversity (2001) or the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage (2003), the results of a process that probably had its first legal expression in the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity. In that sense there is an interesting parallel with comparative philology, the application of an approach to the development of languages that had been pioneered in studies of biological evolution.¹³ The close relationship of the study of language, folklore, ethnology and literature as 'national sciences', forms of exploration of the *Volksggeist* in a diachronic frame, belonged to a particular period in European history. Today there is less space for and less interest in language other than in more historically orientated research on the larger historic archival collections and on the genres of the verbal arts and oral traditions.

NOTES

1 Of course the French Republic itself actively set about the marginalisation of languages other than French on the territory of the republic, exemplified in the report the *abbé* Grégoire presented to the Convention nationale in 1794: "Report on the Need and the Means to Eliminate *Patois* [i.e. regional languages and dialects] and to Generalise the Use of the French Language" (*Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française*). The hostility of the French state to regional languages was often contested by folklorists (Ó Giolláin 2022: 116–125).

2 This work in turn informed the association of Hungarian with Finnish made by the Transylvanian-born scholar Sámuel Gyarmathi (1751–1830) in his *Affinitas linguae hungaricae cum linguis fennicae originis grammaticae demonstrata* (1799) (see Saarinen 2001; Szevérenyi 2021 and Aspaas 2022).

3 Scholarship on colonialism has tended to neglect Russia in favour of the European sea-borne empires: Portugal, Spain, France, Britain, the Netherlands, etc. Alexis Hofmeister (2014: 25) argues that the sea-borne type of empire "had to develop a universal theory of ethnic difference as a function of its global civilizing mission" whereas the Russian empire "with gradual transitions from the core to the peripheries, had to come to terms with many particular situations of ethnic difference", applied no "universal theory" and remained "flexible enough to accommodate ethnic diversity of all possible kinds".

4 In the 1864 war, Prussia was to conquer Schleswig-Holstein.

5 For Gramsci's notion, see Forgacs 1993.

6 Considering how recent genetic research has revolutionised our understanding of ancient population movements, we can imagine the impact of comparative philology in the 19th century.

7 The Estonians were the major exception here, of course, though political conditions ensured that a national movement developed later in Estonia than in Finland.

8 The Khanty and Mansi, speakers of the Ob-Ugrian languages, are indigenous peoples of western Siberia, traditionally living from fishing, trapping, hunting and herding reindeer.

9 Antonio Gramsci (1985: 188) retorted that this was “simply a game with words to define a complex phenomenon that eludes compact definitions”.

10 Meyer was referring to the oldest vernacular writing of western Europe, that of Old Irish, which appeared in stone inscriptions (*ogham*) from the 4th century CE and in a well-established literary language by the 7th century.

11 The journal, founded by K. Meyer and Ludwig Stern, was briefly renamed *Zeitschrift für keltische Philologie und Volksforschung* between 1940 and 1943 (vols. 22–23).

12 A final volume, edited by Rudolf Trüb, appeared in 2003.

13 I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this latter point.

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