

Daniel Nordman
Directeur de recherche au Centre National
de la Recherche Scientifique
75019 Paris

nordman@ehess.fr
Tél. 01 40 34 90 27

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Languages and Territory in France (XVIth - XIXth centuries)*

It is currently believed that strong ties link languages and territories together. But, to not incur serious misunderstandings, one should be advised that the relations must be evaluated at different levels.

Let us take an example, a fictitious one. A short, isolated sentence appears: some people spoke German (or rather a Germanic language) in Lorraine. The context remains absolutely silent. What can be concluded from these few words? According to different periods, to the stakes, the spokesmen, such a dangerous phrase could be interpreted in many different ways, such as: 1. they made use of a Germanic idiom, *concurrently* with French (generally speaking, without any geographical partition, but with the idea of a sort of bilingualism); 2. there were several *regions* in Lorraine, and each of them had its specific history, traditions and language; 3. it is of *no consequence* if, in this province, people spoke one language or another one, German or French; 4. a Germanic language was spoken in Lorraine, *although* in fact Lorraine - or only a part of it in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries, and the two dukedoms after the death of Stanislas in the XVIIIth - belonged or should have belonged to the kingdom of France; 5. or this Germanic language was used there, *since* Lorraine was or should have remained as a part of the Holy Empire. And so on. True or not, or only approximative, all those formulas have some value within an argumentative system, which may be implicit or entirely missing. In any case, they ought to be read through what they are supposed to express. But the opacity might be impenetrable. So one could assert that such a phrase might mean anything and its contrary, inasmuch as the reader wants to scrutinize the past through new concepts (that is to say the links between languages, nations and territory, as we have been taught since the XIXth century).

Beyond any doubt, one could find or extract some clear sentences relative to this kind of ties. In the XVIth century, we know that the Emperor Charles Quint once proclaimed that the archbishopric of Cambrai (within the boundaries of the Holy Empire until Louis XIV, then in France) did belong to the Holy Empire of the German nation, *though* the inhabitants did not speak German (*Episcopatum cameracensem sub sacro imperio germanicae nationis esse, quamvis germanico idiomate non utantur*). More than two centuries later, in 1772, the jurisconsult J. J. Moser, dealing with the territorial area of Germany, dissociated language and nationality, and remarked that people in Montbéliard (a small landlocked principality, in Eastern France, subject to the German house of Wurtemberg) were German *although* they spoke French [Noël, 1976, pp. 65-67].

I am not sufficiently acquainted with German history and historiography to appreciate whether these theoretical assertions are exceptional or not, *at that time*, in the Holy Empire's context (but we are all of us sure that the romantic doctrines and especially Germanic politics *later on*, since Herder, Fichte and some others, were supported by the ideas of common traditions and by the conviction that nation is omnipresent through the mother tongue). Now, if we turn to France in the XVIIIth century, we may be certain that those links were scarcely evoked. This is an additional reason why a few sentences must be adjusted within wider contexts, so that it could be possible to compare what is eventually underscored by contemporaries, what is only suggested, and what is really lacking, at least in the minds. In any case, the questions raised regarding languages are mainly relative to notions and representations: how is diversity perceived or handled as an ideological, political tool?

So let us make a few steps in the way of a stronger and stronger spatialization.

1- *Languages in France in the end of the XVIIIth century: some figures*

My first interrogation deals with historical geography, or with what specialists call external linguistics (analysing facts such as extension, utilization, social, religious, political uses, by opposition to internal features, phonetics, lexicon, grammar, syntax, etc.). In contrast with the Holy Empire - a confederation of States, several hundred States, often tiny principalities -, France was a massive, coherent, unified kingdom (on the whole, from the territorial, not institutional point of view, of course), the inhabitants of which spoke several languages. As far as I know, there is no means to rigourously evaluate the numbers of locutors, not only because the figures are unavailable, but above all because the categories of locutors were never taken into

account, contrary to taxpayers, houses or communicants, and so on. So we must wait until the beginning of the XIXth century in France, when, the head of the Bureau of Statistics in the Ministry of Interior, Coquebert de Montbret, carried on previous efforts in statistical description and launched several inquiries concerning social, religious categories, commercial products or economical sectors (olives, tobacco, livestock, fabrics), and introduced more precise considerations about languages. So, now, some figures can be extracted, for 1808, from the huge corpus of the departmental, imperial statistics: French, 28 126 000; Italian, 4 079 000; German language: 2 705 000; Flemish: 2 277 000, Breton: 967 000, Basque (a non-Indo-European language): 108 000, out of 38 262 000 inhabitants. When using these figures, one should be advised that soldiers were not included; that imperial France was much larger than France within today's boundaries and, all the more reason, in the XVIIIth century, and, thus, must be disentangled from several Belgian, German and Italian departments (27 to 28 million Frenchmen at the time of Louis XVI); that, if we take into account the progress of francisation during the French Revolution, figures for linguistic minorities should be augmented for the previous century; that the so-called languages comprised all kinds of languages, idioms and dialects, that is to say, the main languages (at least five or six, such as French, Flemish, German, Breton, etc.), and an infinite variety of secondary dialects, belonging to the area of "langue d'oc", in the South, or to the area of "langue d'oïl" in the Northern part of the country; that these merely statistical evaluations ignore the intricate situations of bilingualism (if not multilingualism), as we know that, for instance, in the late XIXth century, peasants in the Alpin mountains were able to speak three or even four languages, i. e. local dialects, and official languages, according to their domestic, economic or social activities. These figures are only approximative, but are the first data referring to a global *perception* of linguistic, geographical entities.

2- Languages and society (XVIth- XVIIIth centuries)

The second question posed is: were people susceptible to differences of languages? Of course, we may surmise that this was the usual case, but sources never dwell on these kinds of difficulties. Ruptures are only mentioned when they involve some obstacles. Let us take a few examples.

Travelling all over Europe, pilgrims, students, tradesmen might use handbooks, where main towns, distances, itineraries, dangers, particularities were carefully registered. Some of these guides included translations, especially when the text was given in latin (the names of the towns were followed in vernacular, sometimes introduced by the word "vulgo"); others were completed with different appendices (the

values of measures, of leagues, or short treaties about currency) and with glossaries of a few indispensable words.

The duality of languages is most obvious in judicial circumstances. When the region around Thionville was annexed by the French monarchy (1659), French was supposed to be the administrative language, but, even at the end of the XVIIIth century, the inhabitants currently spoke a Germanic language, so that testaments were often dictated in this local language, and then translated into French by the clerks. Elsewhere, the official language was concurrent with local dialects which were still the common way to communicate for the lower classes: in the late XVIIIth century, most offenders, charged with forest delicts and brought to trial in the South of France, did not understand the questions - or pretend not to -, and the examination needed the help of interpreters. The same can be found in trials in Brittany.

The linguistic segregation was not only a natural feature, for scolarisation, education and cultural pressures deepened the breach even within households, for instance during the making of an heir. A nobleman in Toulouse (born in 1760) tells his own story: the dialect of his native town was prohibited at home, and he was compelled to speak only French; when attending school, he could not understand the local urban idiom, which was used by his friends; as for his own youngest brothers, they hardly understood French [N. et Y. Castan, p. 68]. In this case, the language was a mark of cultural distinction, directed towards social reproduction.

On the top of society, we find other types of linguistic alternations, with real possibilities of a choice. In the beginning of the XVIIIth century, French had become the universal language in diplomatic conferences - even if latin remained as a written language-, and some other languages too, such as Spanish and Italian, up to a certain point. Undeniably, it appears that French, now, was the language of public discussions and proclamations. But, as soon as disagreements arose between negociators, the diplomats retired from the conference table and expressed their impatience through gestures and confidences in their national tongues - English, German, Spanish-, which won for a spell and were reserved for the motions of intrigue and passion, until the diplomats resumed their official talks.

Wherever the differences - whether inside a family, or inside social practices or political achievements -, from the top to the bottom of the social hierarchy, the consciousness of linguistic uses and of their specific ability was sharp and vigorous. But, for the moment, the connection with spatial distribution - Empires, kingdoms, countries, regions, towns or villages - has not been proved, for these ideas, these behaviours are bound to social, *invisible*, non-geographical diversity.

Many historians, particularly in the XIXth and in the beginning of the XXth century, were convinced that the French monarchy played a great part in destroying peripheral cultures. On this point, one should be free of prejudices, which is most difficult. We know, in fact, the famous ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts (1539) imposing the use of French - the French mother tongue, i. e. the language of the king and of the royal court - for judicial acts, against the use of latin which was the language of the French Catholic Church - whereas the Reformation encouraged the translations of the holy texts into vernacular languages -, and we know that French was a universal language for scholars in the XVIIIth century. But local idioms were not threatened with extinction. When a foreign province was annexed to the kingdom, monarchic edicts required the exclusive use of French by the new authorities in the XVIIth century. It is true that, in Strasbourg, the cultural and linguistic mandates could be too a means to struggle against Reformation. But, generally speaking, these edicts did not succeed in bringing the French people to the French language, owing to the fact that many of them had no access to written culture. At any rate, the target of the monarchy was mainly to make the subjects understand orders, thanks to a French-speaking administration able to apply the royal laws, for it was all the same to the king and the intendants whether the lower classes should be deeply francized or not, providing the subjects obeyed. So the *society* in itself was divided according to the capacity of speaking French. As a matter of fact, some forms of so-called bilingualism were thus supported, but the distribution of the linguistic aptitudes never coincided with a given *space*.

3- *Towards a territorial perception of languages?*

The establishment of this fact brings us to examine more closely if any signs of rupture were organized in space.

Guidebooks and travel diaries often point out, along the roads which were carefully described, in the body of the text, different obstacles or edges: a village, a forest, a single tree, a river, a cross, a boundary-stone, etc. Théodore de Mayerne-Turquet, the author of a description of France and of a large part of Western Europe, at the end of the XVIth century, noted the oddness of the Basque language, which is, he said, quite foreign to French people and other nations, and is supposed to be the primitive language in Spain. In the Spanish Low Countries, people spoke, in part, a rough language when they lived close to France; in part, Flemish and low German; or both languages in several places. Bern, in Switzerland, dominates a large territory, German-speaking and Roman-speaking as well [Mayerne-Turquet, 1615, pp. 28, 36, 49-

50]. Montaigne, when travelling to Italy, notes the last French-speaking village, just before he enters into Germany, and he remarks certain towns in the North of Italy where the inhabitants know the French language (Turin) [Montaigne, *Journal de voyage*, ed. 1983, pp. 88, 150, 363-364]. But the description of space - linguistic characteristics included - unfolds in a filiform, thread-like way, on the pattern of the road. In neither of these two books, the linguistic sites take place in a deep, homogeneous spread which would be built like a mental map.

Now, let us progress on our way to stronger forms of spatialisation. I come to the crux of the matter: is it possible to find, in those times, indications which could speak well for ties between some enlarged territory and linguistic features? Could these signs be arranged and projected, with spatial relationships, distances and configurations, on a topographic plan? In other terms, are geographical paintings of languages conceivable, for example ancient maps with outlines, compact colours or specific, abstract symbols? It seems that the test of the map is the gist of the problem.

These linguistic maps - it would be more pertinent to say linguistic marks scattered on a map - were quite exceptional. The truth is that what the specialists generally call thematic maps - climatic, mineralogical, geological, economical, demographic, and so on - appear late, in some cases in the XVIIIth century and especially in the XIXth. Linguistic maps do not escape from this general rule. The first one to be known in modern Europe has been drawn by B. Schultz (Bartholomeus Scultetus, 1593) and shows a boundary separating, in Lusace (West of the Neisse river), two linguistic domains (Germanic and Wende, i.e. a Slavic people). There is a possibility that such a map could be explained by its location in the core of central Europe, but the question might be investigated more. Anyway, the line marking the linguistic boundary is a very short, slight one.

Much more surprising are the coloured maps, provided with large coloured blocks and dotted lines, which have been published in Nuremberg (1741, 1754) by Gottfried Hensel, in his *Synopsis universae philologiae (...)*. (see below, annex 4). Each mainland is roughly divided into territorial entities, in which the first words of the prayer Our Father are inscribed through different languages: two for France, five for the Iberian peninsula (among them an Arabic mention, in the South of Spain), two for Italia (Italian and Latin), and several languages of Scandinavian, Germanic, Balkan Europe (with another Arabic inscription). The map of Asia, constructed according the same principle, is packed with texts in different languages, written in their respective characters (Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, etc.). The attempt is extended, in a much more perilous way, to Africa, the unknown continent - but a few Arabic words in Mauritania

have been crossed off, and the cartographer had to renounce for Monomotapa (*de cujus Lingua nihil nobis constat*) - and to America where the prayer has been replaced by some details relative to migrations of populations. These four maps are completed by linguistic legends dealing with some alphabets. The results could be summed up by the following considerations. First, from a graphical and technical point of view, the chosen scale could not fit the project of representing linguistic territories in detail, but, conversely, as it incorporated the whole world, the idea is to express a general, syncretic, even theoretical - and Western- value. In the second place, Hensel took a greater interest in philology, in the genealogy and history of languages, in their formal aspects, even in the migrations of the languages, than in any properly so-called linguistic geography. Nevertheless, the progress of languages throughout history may be converted into some spatial distribution within countries. There is nothing in this rudimentary cartography that could lead to the idea of linguistic minorities or majorities, to the notion of linguistic claims corresponding to or not to the actual State boundaries, nothing that could evoke any kind of nationalism grounded on one language. But Hensel went this way as far as it was imaginable, in fashioning links between languages and broad territories, all the more so as these sketches are probably unique, except for some rare, unaccomplished projects.

The rare indications above are, on the whole, strengthened through a systematic examination of several series of maps, of several provinces within the French kingdom, where we know the inhabitants in the XVIIIth century still speak non-French languages, that is to say, German in Lorraine, Breton in Brittany, Flemish in Flanders, Catalan in Roussillon. About 430 maps have been gathered for this purpose, but internal provinces have been excluded from the corpus, for it was quite unimaginable that any inscription relative to dialects - belonging to *oc* or *oïl* areas - could be registered. In a first group of maps, single toponyms are indicated, such as Trier or Trèves. In a second group, we find two names for one town, most of the time superimposed on each other: Perpinya and Perpignan in Roussillon, Lutzelsstein or La Petite Pierre, dukedom of Zweibrück or Deux Ponts, Unser Frau zum See or Notre-Dame du Lac, Glashüt and Verrerie, Guemunde and Sarguemine in Lorraine or in the neighbourhood. At best, some names (Thionville and Diedenhoven) may remind the reader of the existence of a frontier, or of a recent history. But these doubles are surprisingly rare on the map by Cassini, which is so rich in all kinds of figurines (reliefs, villages with their steeples, scattered places, castles, abbeys, mills, groves, roads, etc.). The fact is that linguistic particularities are never represented as concrete, visible features. The distinctions and the boundaries between languages never cross the land, but stretch, just like invisible

lines, inside the family or the social practices: the perception of languages is not a matter of space.

But, later on, it happened that this sensibility was linked to some specific territories. Only maps could express such a mutation.

Not even the French Revolution arouses linguistic cartography, which appears at the time of Napoleon as an answer to the large inquiry of Coquebert de Montbret (Daniel Nordman, 1989). Out of the fifteen maps which have been preserved, we could distinguish several varieties: one (the Po department, in Italy) is covered with specific symbols - small red stars - for the French - speaking villages; some maps represent linguistic delimitation by the means of lines (for instance the Alpes-Maritimes and the Meurthe): the administration is now able to visually make the difference between the land which is on one side and the land beyond; a third class includes maps not only endowed with precise outlines, but overlaid with compact, unified colours (for example, pink for French and green for German).

No geopolitical consequence was involved, at that time, in these semiologic choices, for the department which is the basis of the investigation is too rigid and too narrow. The target is but statistical, and the departments were supposed to remain for ever within the French territory. For these last reasons, it is impossible to suppose any geopolitical pretensions relying on the fact of language. But if the evolution is slow, and if, in this case, technics and process of knowledge precede political practices, the inquiry by the First Empire, at least, was the first step. A few decades later, a new stage took place when societies of scholars undertook research work, historical, philological, linguistic as well, in the departments. A historical commission in the Nord, begun in 1839 and entrusted to look after the protection of historical monuments, addresses a memorandum to its members, in order to establish an inventory of the local patrimony. These interests were not limited to architectural questions, to castles, windows, towers or paintings. In 1841-1842, the society examined what was the line of the linguistic demarcation, and, in the bulletin for 1844, a map was published, which showed dotted lines and abstract symbols all together, according to one of the two languages (Flemish or French), or both equally, or only one in a dominant position, as used by the inhabitants (see below, annex 5). Such a representation mingles a spatial distribution with the evidence of bilingualism, but languages still divide society much more than the space in itself.

4- Languages as a system of claims and justifications

How is it possible to share a territory - a part of Western Europe, a province - along geographical lines? Let us remember, for the last time, that the possibility is not inscribed in the land, but in the minds. In other words, did the ancient monarchy make territorial claims in accordance with what the king and his counsellors thought to be linguistic features in a given region? That is the ultimate question, relative to the exact place of the linguistic arguments in the territorial and geopolitical strategies.

The idea is not absolutely missing, but it disappears afterwards for several centuries. Nowadays, historians of the Middle Ages think that a sort of linguistic nationalism might have played a part, since the kings of England and their officials could justify English claims on France on the grounds that they could still speak French at home [Lusignan, 1986, pp. 107-110, 116-117, 187], or when Alphonse the Magnanimous, opening the Cortes in Barcelona, addresses his proposition in Castilian, but, significantly, read it in Catalan in the next session (1416, 1419). According to a text by Gerson (about 1420), Philippe de Valois had become king of France because the French people understood his language. At the end of the Middle Ages, language could be used as a tool for possible annexations, on account of the fact that people spoke French in Burgundy, in Savoy, in Lorraine [Wolff, 1982, pp. 136-137, 140-141; Colette Beaune, 1985, pp. 297-298]. At the time of the Renaissance, Sebastian Münster, a geographer - the Strabon of Germany-, author of *La Cosmographie universelle ...* (Bâle, 1544, in German, many editions in six different languages), defines the boundaries by language (text of 1575, revised by Belleforest):

"Les regions estoient jadis separees par montagnes & rivières: mais aujourd'huy les langues, & dominations divisent les royaumes des royaumes, & par ce moyen toutes les regions, qui parlent l'Alemand, sont aujourd'huy reputees du païs d'Alemagne, soit qu'elles soyent ou par deçà ou par de là le Rhin, et le Danube. Et aujourd'huy la Germanie s'estend jusqu'à la rivière de Meuse, & mesme passe outre. Du costé du midy, elle s'estend jusqu'aux Alpes (...)" [Belleforest, 1575, t. I, col. 887; Nordman, 1986, p. 36].

Alsace, then in the Holy Empire, was particularly a territorial stake. At the beginning of the XVIth century, a polemic broke out, opposing the humanist Jacob Wimpheling to Thomas Murner, a monk. The former was the author of *Germania ad rempublicam argentinensem*, a short dissertation which he addressed in 1501 to the members of the government of Strasbourg, and in which Wimpheling developed some proofs (for instance, the fact that the name of Pepin subsisted in a Germanic proverb). In another work, *Declaratio ad mitigandum adversarium*, Wimpheling introduced less precarious arguments - which will continue for a long time -, taking his stand on toponymy and on the language of the ancient documents: the names of the Alsacian

towns do not sound French but German, he said; texts in French are missing. If French-speaking people had actually dwelled in Alsace for long centuries, how could you explain, he asked, the fact that this language had disappeared entirely?

And now a last example, outside the Germanic domain. A quite remarkable notation is available, given, in the beginning of the XVIIth century by a geographer, Pierre Bergeron. In his report *Voyage ès Ardennes, Liège et Pays-Bas en 1619* he wrote:

"Il n'y a presque haye, ny buisson qui (...) sépare <les Pays-Bas espagnols et la France>; ce qui monstre que tous ces païs là ont autrefois, et par plusieurs siècles, faict une notable part de la France, et qu'il nous faut espérer qu'encores, Dieu aydant, y pourront-ils un jour estre réunis, comme il semble que leur naturelle situation et la communion de langue et de moeurs les y veuille justement obliger, afin que toutes les Gaules soient réduites à leur principe." [Bergeron, p. 405].

Here, there is not only a neutral statement, but the sentence includes a plain revendication. Oddly enough, this kind of claim is exceptional, more and more unusual as time goes along. Granted that, in the Middle Ages, those assertions were not fortuitous, at least we may affirm that, by the XVIIth century, the project of building closer, stronger relations between the territory and the language was no longer in the limelight. Yet some sovereigns happened to express this link, Henri IV in the beginning of the XVIIth century and Louis XIV in the second half of the century, but their sentences were always brief, or questionable, if not controversial. Most famous is a speech of Henri IV, at the time when a group of small regions (Bresse, pays de Gex, Bugey, N and NE of Lyon), belonging to the duke of Savoye, were incorporated into the kingdom:

"Il estoit raisonnable que, puisque vous parlez naturellement françois, vous fussiez subjects à un roi de France. Je veux bien que la langue espagnole demeure à l'Espagne, l'allemande à l'Allemand, mais toute la françoise doit être à moi."

The sentence was built as a maxim and had to make an impact. From the XIXth century, many historians, vying with one another, piously repeated this beautiful admonishment, which was known by all the schoolboys and schoolgirls, and was present, for instance, in the famous Malet et Isaac, a handbook of history for several republican generations. These words have been attributed sometimes by scholars to an historian contemporaneous with the king, but the quotation was always given without reference, and I have never found the original text.

During the reign of every French king who is supposed to have mightily contributed to the making of the national space, sentences of this sort are available. We can think of a few words by Louis XIV, dealing with the Franche-Comté in a very concise manner,

"(...) Je considérais que c'était une province grande, fertile et importante, qui, par sa situation, par sa langue, et par des droits aussi justes qu'anciens, devait faire partie de ce royaume, et par qui, m'ouvrant un nouveau passage en Allemagne, je le fermais en même temps à mes ennemis" [Louis XIV, 1978, p. 261].

or, on the contrary, of the priggish, muddled, obscure admonition by a Richelieu's messenger, when the French monarchy tried in 1633 to annex Lorraine:

You cannot, he says, contest the French name, for it would be paradoxical that the speech would be French and the heart a foreigner. The ancient Egyptians had consecrated the fig-tree to the god of the word, seeing that a leaf looks like a tongue and the fruit like a heart. The two of them are borne by a single stem (see full text below, annex 1).

This address is interminable and is the opposite of the quite allusive, previous text. It wants to demonstrate something very witty, that is to say an indispensable correspondance between language and political space as an essential target of the French monarchy. But if we go back to the first developments in my paper and try to insert these two declarations within the whole political, judicial, diplomatic, geographical and geopolitical documents, we can maintain, on the one hand, that a single word (language) has to be compared to a wider context (historical rights, or, elsewhere, military objectives, king's glory, etc.) and , on the other wand, that the philosophical and theoretical contention had no equivalent at that time - as far as it is possible to assert that something does not exist: historians have to be, of course, cautious.

And if now we turn to the infinite discussions applied , not in Paris, in Madrid or in Nancy, but on the spot, to the boundaries - huge reports, letters by hundreds, thousands - we observe that the linguistic argument was never advanced, even when the process of delimitation took place in a more or less mixed region. For instance, in 1661, negotiations had to fix the boundaries between France and Lorraine. In one of the concerned regions, nearly three quarters of the quoted toponyms are Germanic; the first names of the witnesses are nearly all French, and one half of the names, Germanic. But this social contiguity is never handled as a tool to cut through the

territory. Then , the arguments are different: havoc due to the Thirty Years Wars, tithing, legal rights, taxes, and even geographical features (localisation, boundary-stones, distances, paths, enclaves). In this large spectrum, language is absent.

The observation is valid for the XVIIIth century, when French negociators were instructed to define, together with those from Germanic principalities or Austrian Low Countries, etc., precise boundaries for their respective lands, everywhere around the royal territory. The process of delimitation does not cease, for decades. All kinds of arguments, were invoked, except for linguistic. In these later discussions, the conclusion is undisputable.

So we might conclude that, however acute - only in some cases - consciousness of language may be, this consciousness is never used as a weapon in any sytem of claims or geopolitical justifications for the last two centuries of the Ancient Regime. The first explanation is obvious: French territory enlarged, embracing more and more provinces or regions in which the inhabitants did not understand French (Roussillon, Strasbourg and Alsace, and many fortified towns in the North), so that such a revendication, after the XVIIIth century, could undermine the very project towards expansion. At this time, France had to be the nation of different minorities, of several languages and of several cultures, or it *could not* be the vast, mighty State wanted by the kings and their ministers. One could conjure a larger reason: the construction of a national identity is an historical phenomenon of long duration, collecting several distinctive features. In the Western world - at least in France, which is the subject of this paper -, Latin, and some modern languages such as Spanish and French had been the instruments of official communication, for scholars, humanists, and the governing class. Nevertheless, the King, the State, law and faith came before language.

5- From the French Revolution to Michelet and the others

Indeed, the inscription of the language in the representation of a nation, as a concept, as a value, as a justification, is a late step. Even the French Revolution, which brought the sovereignty of the nation, the right of the peoples to self-determination, did not put the emphasis on languages. At this time, French language was encouraged and opposed to the local idioms, as the language of the nation and of reason against the survival of superstitions [de Certeau, Julia, Revel,1975]. In the mind of the abbé Gregoire, who launched an important inquiry regarding idioms, the annihilation of idioms would open the way to the diffusion of the enlightenment, to an easier application of the laws and to political peace. The circular of Grégoire, sent in August

1790, defined forty-three questions showing that the questionnaire mainly dealt with linguistic problems (the words derived from Celtic, Greek, Latin, the pronunciation, grammar books and dictionaries, and the books written in local idioms) and with social and cultural facts (education, prejudices, situation of towns and country), but not with time (only three specific questions) nor space (three questions only, such as question 16: does this idiom differ much from a village to another one? or question 18 : in what territorial extent is this idiom in use?). One proof seems eloquent: there were no maps in the documents and the answers. At the time of the Convention, language was still a social and cultural feature, distinguishing the progress and the new spirit from the darkness of ignorance, the unity of the nation from the diversity of ancient provinces, but not the character of a territorial State as opposed to the others. Moreover, in 1790, decrees were translated and speeches delivered in langue d'oc, for the law had to be perfectly understood everywhere. Some years later, Reubell, born in Colmar (Alsace), and a member of the Directoire government looking after the defence of the territories incorporated into France (in the Rhine region) -, was indifferent to the matter of language.

Surprising conclusions, indeed, which do not exactly fit with what so many historians wrote, dealing, not specifically with the French Revolution, but with the history of France from the beginning. They do not fit with the cultural revival of languages - which is in my opinion, may I insist, a richness of the country. This revival has been supported, for instance in the regions of langue d'oc, by writers, by historians and philologists, by societies of scholars, by specialists in some sciences as toponymy, by some worker poets, and above all, by the "félibrige" (with Mistral, Roumanille and five other poets) which was a cultural movement directed to the restoration of the langue d'oc. Elsewhere and recently, we could take into account some more political and territorial claims. But what I wanted to present to-day was not the different expressions of the cultural or political identity - which are not unknown and anyway would require a long exposition covering the XIXth and XXth centuries -, but the critical moment, or rather one of the moments, of the inflexion turning the linguistic consciousness into a national and territorial definition of languages.

There can be no doubt that this moment takes place only in the first part of the XIXth century and should be correlated, let us say roughly, with the romanticist change. Thus Michelet opened his *Tableau de la France* [first edition, 1833]:

"L'histoire de France commence avec la langue française. La langue est le signe principal d'une nationalité. Le premier monument de la nôtre est le serment dicté par Charles le Chauve à son frère, au traité de 843 (*sic* for 842)" (see below, annex 2).

Michelet is not the single person responsible for this statement. Little by little, the idea became quite commonplace, according to which a nation as a whole is characterized by one language, both throughout the entire national space and by the beginning of its history. Soon, by that time, linguists, geographers, politicians drew or used linguistic maps [Krallert, 1961]: the Czech philologist Safarik published a map [Prague, sd ed., 1842], representing the great national linguistic families in Middle and Eastern Europe (Slavic, Latin, German, Turkish, etc.), with their respective geographical positions. In Germany, the first linguistic map seems to be Dr. Karl Bernhardt's [*Sprachkarte von Deutschland...*, Kassel, sd ed. 1849], and the first atlas is Dr. Heinrich Berghaus' *Physikalischer Atlas*, Gotha, 1848 (map of France, 1846) which gathered 19 maps proposing a linguistic or ethnographical classification of the whole world, from the American tribes to the Caucasian languages, Breton, Basque, oc and oïl idioms all included. In France also, lines and tints invaded linguistic maps. Besides maps included in some reviews, a book in 1863 showed the limit of Breton language, with a red line, in the IXth century.

Compared to the two or three linguistic maps available by 1750, the examples, after 1860, would be countless. At the time of the Revolutions of 1848 and, afterwards, in the making of the Italian or German unities, a very long evolution was certainly achieved towards a more visible perception of linguistic territories, which could justify all kinds of claims. .

From a general point of view, and to sum up, however strong the assertion by Michelet may be, when enhancing the straight links between French nationality and language from the very beginning of its history (in the Middle Ages), one should admit that languages, at least in France (and in a large part of Western Europe), had been more specifically correlated with social classes, generations, even alphabetisation, than with a given space. But Michelet's statement, in itself, is also an important feature of the XIXth century debate relative to languages, and ought to be admitted as a major element in the making of national territory at that time.

And if, finally, we try to answer the question which is the object of our discussion - territory as history's metaphor- we could assert that French language and linguistic territories in France were not an essential or an eternal feature of national consciousness, so to speak immutable through successive ages, but have rather been built belatedly as a metaphor of French history, in a precise historical background and for a definite purpose, with retrospective effects which of course do not alter what was really in the past, but elaborate the memory of linguistic territories.

6- France and others in Europe (XIXth century)

At this stage of the discussion, one should be aware of the fact that the metaphor is here much more than a mere reflection of the past, seeing that it envelops a kind of paradox. By all means the conventional classifications ought to be shifted, for at times the French case brings into prominence the inadequacy of the usual distinctions, relative to the definition of nationality in the XIXth century, throughout Western and Middle Europe.

If the exposition below is but a rough sketch of what happened in the continent from 1815 to the treaties which put an end to the First World War, it could still be possible to more or less maintain some of the macroscopic typologies regarding the place of languages in the making of a nation. Still let us first remember the fact that besides the linguistic claims all kinds of economic, social and political forces might exist. Around 1840-1848 for instance, the national movement in Hungary is supported as well by conservative magnates demanding more historical and political rights, and by the gentry which defends its nobiliary privileges but rejects social reform, by some reformers who conceive intellectual, economical development (agricultural credit, emancipation of peasants, public works), by a new-born progressive party calling for social equality and for a revolutionary transformation of State and society. In a country where philological erudition and development of poetry and novel succeeded in converting Hungarian into a more refined language, which could be used in political debates (concurrently with, or instead, of German and Latin), the political currents are numerous, and express several kinds of complex and even contradictory aspirations, which are founded on historical nationalism, local traditions and Western liberalism as well, inasmuch as noblemen could be conservative from a social point of view and liberal on the political ground. All the more reason, such social diversities, always bound to specific and regional identities, could be found and described elsewhere, in Germany for instance.

Now if we limit the analysis to the criterion of language, some models could be outlined: 1. The Swiss model, which has been in fact the less generally accepted in Europe, enriched copious political, juridical and geopolitical considerations, which were first based on the existence of a small country without any dynastical or ethnical past, and secondly on a very long history as an ancient federation of small States, tied with one another through loose alliances and structures [Marchal, 1993, pp. 271-273], from the end of the XIIIth century to 1798, and as the Helvetic Confederation (1848), overlapping three linguistic areas (French, German, Italian). This diversity is most suitable to sustain the idea of a conscious, voluntary nation,

independant from linguistic traditions. The Belgian case, which, in 1830, associated two different linguistic regions (Walloon, Flemish) - although French, which was spoken by the bourgeoisie, was at that time the official, political, language, used in the administration, in the army till the third part of the XIXth century or the beginning of the XXth - could be classified in this group. 2. On the opposite side - so to speak, it would not be convenient to imagine symetrical situations - historical nations might exist, without constituting, or no longer constituting, an independant State (Poland). 3. Unitarian nationalism appeared inside geographical areas constituted with several States. In Germany and Italy, languages played the part of a ferment towards the constitution of the political unity, in addition to all kinds of factors, such as political, ideological, economic, and in spite of some differences (for Italy was but a "geographical expression", as Metternich said, composed of several States independant from one another, and was also a homogeneous entity from the point of view of religion and culture, whereas Germany was a confederation of much more numerous States - 39 in 1815-, with stronger religious and economic diversities). 4. Elsewhere, languages conduced towards the inverse solution, inside the huge empires associating against their will several peoples which tried to fight for their cultural traditions and to obtain a larger autonomy, if not their independance, from Austria (Czech, Hungarian, or Lombard and Venetian), from the Ottoman empire (Greek, Rumanian, Serbian, and so on), from three monarchies (Polish), and even from Holland (Belgian), Great Britain (Irish) or Sweden (Norwegian). Languages, as an element of national revival, may lead, more or less, to the destruction of the former States. 5. The emergence of new political structures, founded on the principle of nationality, often liberated nations, on the rebound, to the detriment of other cultural minorities, as the fact happened, for instance, a few years after the independance of Belgium, when a Flemish literary wave appeared and spread, and brought before long the first political assertions; or, after 1867, inside Austria and the Hungarian kingdom (linked to Austria: the emperor was king in Hungary) where the predominant German speaking nation was keeping down Italian, Slovenian, Polish, Ruthenian, Czech peoples on the one hand, and Hungarians, on the other hand, mastered Slovak, Ruthenian, Rumanian, Serbian, Croatian, German minorities. 6. A final category could be represented in the XIX th century by the French and the Catalan cases as well (placed indeed very theoretically on the same level), which were expressed through a literary and cultural revival (Catalanism, P. Vilar wrote, began as a "Félibrige", and its cultural expressions looked like Mistral's works); but these specific features - geographical situation, historical traditions and particularism, languages, etc.-, and the devotion for poetic language and Catalan past changed into a regionalist consciousness and more precise claims, owing to the weakness of the Spanish State as a whole and to the economic advance of Catalonia [Vilar, éd. 1971, pp. 70-72].

. All these facts are well known, and such a historical panorama could seem irrelevant by dint of static simplifications, inasmuch as any classification of this type does not take into account the movements throughout history, nor the process through antagonists pressures (Revolutions, military and political repressions, intellectual, ideological expressions and responses, and so on). Now, in the second half of the XIXth century, and especially since the Austrian-Hungarian Compromise (1867), the more objective definition of nation could hardly be found, to crown the paradox, among those peoples living in the Austrian empire, in which the interlacing of ethnic groups was yet much more complicated than anywhere else. These multiethnic States were the very attestation of the unexpected fact that the more motley the peoples are in regard to languages, the more difficult it is to bring this complexity to its logical consequences, that is to say, claims for a national identity which could be founded on one main language. Even when linguistic maps were drawn, the scales could not always represent the details of the local positions. The notions of mother tongue or usual language were inadequate inside bicultural families. Moreover in Transleithanie - dominated by Hungarians -, Serbs and Croats spoke a common language since 1850 (with some variations), but hostility existed between the two ethnies (to the latter a more favourable statute had been given in 1868, thanks to an Hungarian-Croat Compromise). And at the end of the XIXth century and particularly around 1900, pangermanist propaganda, trying to make a Greater Germany (larger than the Bismarck's Little Germany, supposed to be saturated), progressed to a slight extent both in Germany and in Austria, but the effects were strongly handicapped by the religious opposition between protestant German in Germany and catholic Austria, which required a sort of crusade to convert German people of Austria into protestants (with insignificant results). Thus, even in the multilingual Middle Europe, many conflicts grew apart from the linguistic differences [Michel, 1996, pp. 56-57].

But there is another way to present one classical, although somewhat too rigid, alternative, the merit of which is the fact, on the one hand, that this contradistinction places emphasis on the *genesis* of an ideological phenomenon rather than on the political events which have happened here and there, and also the fact that, on the other hand, it has been ceaselessly developed by contemporaries and later on by generations of historians as well. So two major definitions of nationality were advanced. The first one is the French doctrine, implemented at the time of the French Revolution and by Napoleon III, and manifested by the practice of plebiscites: that means for peoples the right to self-determination, according to what they want to be, not to what they are from a political, historical, linguistical, or even, in some cases, religious point of view. This is the definition of a voluntary, conscious, subjective nation. The other

main doctrine, known as the German or the romantic one, has been supported by Herder, Fichte and others, and expresses the idea that nation is an involuntary, unconscious, objective fact, and gathers willy-nilly people who share the same traditions, the same manners, and speak the same mother tongue. All kinds of historical works, especially in the philological, linguistical, literary domain, contributed to this renewal throughout Western and Middle Europe, thanks to the progress of erudition, the publication of ancient texts, legends, tales, popular stories, and thanks to a marked taste for the Middle Ages. One of the major tests has been, as early as 1813 (Arndt) until the achievement in 1871, the claims for the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, of which the inhabitants were German, according to many authors and the German doctrine, because they used to speak a German language, or French, according to Fustel de Coulanges (1870) and Renan. Then the two antagonistic statements reached their climax : antipodal to language - eventually joined with historical rights as a whole, since Alsace and Lorraine had been parts of the German Roman Holy Empire until the XVIIIth century (Alsace) and the XVIIIth (Lorraine), to say nothing of the strategic importance, for the German empire, of the boundary established far beyond the Rhine -, there was the will of the inhabitants.

It is worth admiring the simplicity of the controversy, especially when theory and practice, ideological positions and geopolitical evolution fit together so marvellously. If we maintain this opposition, Michelet's statement is odd, within the French context, if not quite incomprehensible. Yet a quite remarkable contribution by Jean-Yves Guiomar recently showed how much the mere opposition between conscious nation and ethnical nation - coinciding with the secular conflict between France and Germany - should be seriously reevaluated, particularly through the complex thoughts of two key authors. Herder, a German protestant (1744-1803), is supposed to have enlarged on the popular genius and the national traditions, which are to be found in ancient poetry and legends, in the primitive expressions of the collective soul, and to have made the statement that language is a principle consubstantial to man and civilizations somehow like living organisms. Such a definition, in fact, needs qualifying, for Herder insists on the necessity of international and intercultural exchanges, on the part played by technics and economy and on the progress of mankind. On the so-called French side, the historian Renan, who gave the well-known definition of the nation (as a soul, a spiritual principle, a common will for the present, the will to do again great things together, [*Qu'est ce qu'une nation?*, 1882]), should be read too apart from the context of the annexation of the Alsace-Lorraine - which explains this statement: many phrases and sentences in his work might illustrate the opposite model, the principle of nationality [Guiomar, 1996; Winock, 1996]. Thus the cross-fire could be an incitation for examining texts and situations more closely. No doubt, the creation of Belgium, in

1830, in spite of, or owing to, the linguistic duality - besides some German-speaking inhabitants in the Eastern part of the country - corresponds to the classical right of self-determination attributed to the French Revolution. But in Greece, which was the first independent State sprung from the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire and the first one born of the principle of nationality in XIXth century Europe, president Capo d'Istria, elected by the insurgents, affirmed that the Greek nation was composed of all people who professed orthodox religion and spoke the language of their forefathers since the fall of Constantinople, wherever they lived in the empire. Therefore, he underlined the historical rights. Yet, the Greek case is held to be the perfect illustration of the French concept of nationality. In Italy, even some declarations by Mazzini - the revolutionary, republican, romantic leader, who exalted the mission of the next unified, democratic Italy towards the association of countries on behalf of the whole mankind - happened to define nation not only as a common thought, a common principle, and a common purpose, but as the society of people unified either by language, geographical situation, or historical role. Thus unitary will cannot be only an abstraction. Many other instances of mixed statements could be invoked here and there.

The fact is that when the past is rebuilt on the spur of the moment, either the would-be historical continuity or the actual wish of peoples might count for nothing in comparison with the making of present and urgent political choices. Thus we could explain why historians, so different such as Michelet and Fustel de Coulanges, made inverted statements compared with those which were rather expected. See the last pages of the *Tableau de la France* : France is the country where, Michelet, the liberal, romantic and before long republican historian says in substance, the nationality, the national personality is the closest in the world to the individual personality; there, the local spirit disappeared day by day; the influence of soil, climate, race, gave place to social and political action; man escaped from the tyranny of the local and material circumstances. Human society is spiritualist, and looks for the high and abstract unit of the country. So, according to the usual distinction recalled above, the opening of the *Tableau*, which deals with the part played by the language in nationality, jars with the end. But, at the European scale, and in the romantic and liberal, even prophetic context of the Revolutions of the first half of the century, the role of language was quite commonplace. Now, when, less than forty years later, a strong polemic opposed the two historians Mommsen and Fustel de Coulanges regarding the question to which country Alsace-Lorraine had belonged to and should belong to, the latter defended, in opposition to his German colleague, the classical French thesis of nationality [Fustel de Coulanges, 1893 [1870], pp. 505, 508-509, see below, annex 3), although he was a rationalist, a positivist - and wrongly incensed, after his death, as a simple conservative

historian by the nationalist authoritative extreme right [Hartog, 1988]. At this time, at any rate, national feelings prevailed over political or ideological choices, and, owing to the national tensions, the theoretical, usual distinction was again in order.

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Annexes

1- "Mais serait-il bien possible que vous contestassiez contre ce nom [le nom de Français] et que le Roi, qui est votre Seigneur immédiat qui n'a plus de personne interposé entre lui et vous, entrant en la possession de ce duché trouvât des sujets dont le coeur ne ressemblât à la langue et qui parlant des langages des Français et vivant sous l'obéissance du Roi eût honte de porter le nom de leur langue: la parole sera française et le coeur sera étranger?

Les Égyptiens consacraient à Harpocrate, le dieu de la parole, le figuier - d'autant que la feuille a la figure de la langue, et son fruit la ressemblance du coeur - pour signifier que, comme la feuille et le fruit n'ont qu'une même tige, la langue et le coeur ne doivent avoir qu'une même parole.

Ce qui vous apprend que cela approcherait du monstre que vous, qui êtes français, prissiez un nom contraire à votre langue, lui faisant sacrifice, non plus de ce figuier dont je vous viens de parler, mais de celui qui est maudit en l'Ecriture à cause qu'il ne montrait que des feuilles et ne chargeait jamais de fruit, c'est-à-dire que vous ne lui présentiez que des langues sans coeur comme des corps sans âmes.

Vous êtes sujets au Roi puisque votre Duc était son vassal; la conséquence est nécessaire que lui qui parle saurait volontiers où l'on pourrait mettre la frontière de la France pour la distinguer du pays Barrois, comme si c'étaient pays séparés qui n'ont ni montagnes ni rivières qui les divisent.

Si c'est votre coeur qui fait la frontière et qui défend à Sa Majesté de faire passer le nom de son Royaume dans le Barrois, pour abattre cette montagne de chair il ne se servira point d'autres armes que de Sa douceur et de l'amour. Si vous confessez que c'est votre Roi, il faut que ce soit avec toute Sa puissance et que vous teniez à grand honneur de porter un nom que les étrangers qui ne le peuvent avoir par naissance souhaitent d'avoir par adoption.

La valeur de notre Roi a rendu ces livrées du nom français si glorieuses que toutes les nations en voudraient être parées comme de vêtements qui honorent et assurent tout ensemble ceux qui les portent.

Et d'autant que tout présentement on vient d'avoir avis que le Roi s'achemine et sera en cette ville demain, il faut que votre voix fasse le premier hommage de votre coeur et que, le recevant avec le témoignage de joie que vous devez avoir, il connaisse, par les acclamations de "vive le Roi" que vous lui donnerez en troupes par toutes les rues où il passera, que vous tenez Sa venue à grande bénédiction (...)."

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2- "L'histoire de France commence avec la langue française. La langue est le signe principal d'une nationalité. Le premier monument de la nôtre est le serment dicté par Charles le Chauve à son frère, au traité de 843 (*sic* pour 842). C'est dans le demi-siècle suivant que les diverses parties de la France, jusque- là confondues dans une obscure et vague unité, se caractérisent chacune par une dynastie féodale. Les populations, si longtemps flottantes, se sont enfin fixées et assises. Nous savons maintenant où les prendre, et, en même temps qu'elles existent et agissent à part, elles prennent peu à peu une voix; chacune a son histoire, chacune se raconte elle- même."

Michelet, *Histoire de France*, livre III, *Tableau de la France*