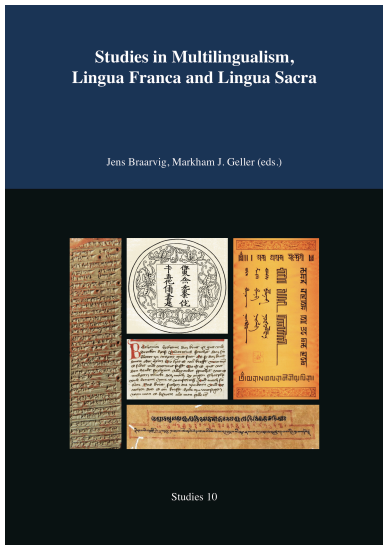


Max Planck Research Library for the History and Development of Knowledge

Studies 10

Markham J. Geller and Jens Braarvig:

Preface



In: Jens Braarvig and Markham J. Geller: *Studies in Multilingualism, Lingua Franca and Lingua Sacra*

Online version at <http://mprl-series.mpg.de/studies/10/>

ISBN 978-3-945561-13-3

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Printed and distributed by:

PRO BUSINESS digital printing Deutschland GmbH, Berlin

<http://www.book-on-demand.de/shop/15501>

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

Preface

Markham J. Geller and Jens Braarvig

The present collection of essays is intended to open new paths into the relatively uncharted territory of multilingualism, which has been attracting increasing scholarly interest within the past few years. The present volume originated within a larger theme of the globalization of knowledge, which was the subject of a monumental and multifaceted collection of essays, *The Globalization of Knowledge in History* (2012); the volume was edited by Jürgen Renn and dedicated to the memory of two inspirational colleagues at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Peter Damerow and Malcolm Hyman, who were both instrumental in bringing this theme of “globalization of knowledge” into the forefront of academic consciousness. The present collection of essays is aimed at filling an important gap within the globalization discourse, with the recognition that knowledge transfer ultimately depends upon cross-border and cross-cultural communication, which turns out to be much more complex than originally realized, and the quest for a fuller understanding of language as the key to such transfers has harnessed the energies of a network of scholars in different disciplines, with the present volume representing initial results. More studies will follow.

The theme of multilingualism and lingua franca as presented in this book has an extensive pre-history, since it represents results from a number of conferences and workshops exploring similar themes. The initial step, setting the stage for multilingualism, was taken by the 97th Dahlem Workshop in 2007 and held at the MPIWG, Berlin, making the case for knowledge transfer in many different contexts; the proceedings were published in (Renn 2012), noted above. At the same time, a similar theme featured at a Melammu conference in Sofia (2008), the proceeds of which were published as *The Ancient World in an Age of Globalization* (2014). In 2009, a conference was organized by Jens Braarvig at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, dedicated exclusively to the theme of “Multilingualism, Linguae Francae and the Global History of Religious and Scientific Concepts,” as a continuation of earlier and less formal discussions on the subject. No less than five articles published here (Andersson, Braarvig, Chlench-Priber, Edzard, and Pharo) were given as papers at the Athens conference. The momentum was maintained by Peter Damerow, who single handedly organized a workshop on the theme of “Writing and the Transmission of Knowledge” (2009), held at the Werner Oechslin Library, Einsiedeln, and one paper in the present volume (Geller) originated from this workshop, although most of the contributions remain unpublished. In early 2010, Velizar Sadovski organized a meeting in Vienna on “Multilingualism in Central Asia, Near and Middle East, from Antiquity to Early Modern Times,” with a core group of participants from the Athens workshop, to ensure continuity. Generally speaking, these conferences and workshops viewed multilingualism against the background of knowledge transfer or globalization, or alternatively as examples of how individual languages or even language groups could influence each other.

Shortly afterwards, at a meeting in Harnack Haus Dahlem in 2010, the two editors of the present volume, together with Florentina Badalanova Geller, decided to change the dis-

course. The idea was to treat *Wissenschaftsgeschichte* as a philological discipline and to launch a new, more focused initiative to explain how the instruments of language actually allow knowledge to diffuse globally through translation and multilingual encounters, employing the vehicles of lingua franca and lingua sacra. The result of this discussion was a 2010 Berlin conference, under the auspices of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science and the Topoi Excellence Cluster of the Freie Universität Berlin, on the theme of “Crossing Boundaries, Multilingualism, Lingua Franca and Lingua Sacra.” Many of the papers presented here represent the fruits of that conference. This was hardly the end of the matter, since research groups within the Max Planck Institute and the Research Group D-5 of the Topoi Excellence Cluster have continued to address the subject of multilingualism, and a recent new project at the MPIWG, “Thinking in Many Tongues,” organized by Dagmar Schäfer and Glenn Most, is currently approaching this theme from fresh perspectives.

The editors would like to acknowledge the constant collaboration of Velizar Sadovski of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW), Institut für Iranistik, in this work. He not only has a paper in this volume, but he founded the Multilingualism Research Group, which included many of the contributors to the present volume, representing a partnership between institutions in Vienna, Berlin, and Oslo; he also organized two events on multilingualism at the Deutsche Orientalistentag in 2011 and 2013, as well as workshops in Vienna in 2011 and 2016.

The editors express their gratitude to the Topoi Excellence Cluster and Max Planck Institute for the History of Science for financial and institutional support, but we are especially indebted to Jürgen Renn for his continuous backing and interest in this project. We also thank Lindy Divarci and the Edition Open Access team for their prodigious efforts in preparing the manuscript for print, in particular Bendix Düker and Sylvia Szenti for their meticulous compilation of the index. We would like to acknowledge the Freie Universität Berlin and University of Oslo, and further the Norwegian Philological Institute, as well as the ERC Advanced Grant BabMed, for providing the favorable working environments in which work on this volume could be brought to completion.

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