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PAUL ROBERT MAGOCSI

on his 70th Birthday

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До 70-річчя від дня народження науковця

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Збірник уміщує півсотні статей провідних науковців з різних країн світу, чиї дослідження перетинаються з науковими темами визначного канадського історика, спеціаліста з проблем історії України П.-Р. Магочія. Збірник підготовлений з нагоди важливого ювілею вченого та є проявом поваги до його наукової спадщини.

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The Preposition “On” and Poland-Lithuania

Tomasz Kamusella

Languages are so obvious and commonplace, especially those which we speak when growing up, that we accept their peculiar mappings of reality as “objective” and almost “natural.” The world viewed through the prism of one’s first language (ideologically dubbed as one’s “native” or “mother tongue”) looks unmediated; we feel the language, its customs and categories to be “transparent”; it feels part of us. Hence, we fail to notice that each language has been shaped by the community of its speakers—a group of people who share a memory of the past and the events that have shaped it. These events, alongside verbal fashions and fads that suddenly gain popularity for a time, have also brushed off onto the language. The link becomes even more pronounced when its words begin to be used for writing letters, books and official documents. From that moment, the written and the oral become interlaced, especially tightly with the onset of modernity when all are expected to attend school and to acquire the skills of reading and writing.

Polish is my first language and is transparent to me in many ways despite my best endeavors to see through its tricks and traps. Only recently, Slavist Michael Moser (University of Vienna), pointed out to me that when in Polish one says “in a country or state,” with some countries the preposition *w* is employed in the function of “in,” while the preposition *na* is used with others. The preposition *w* corresponds to English “in,” but the latter one (*na*) to English “on” or “at.” In Polish there is no general phonological or syntactical rule that would require the use of *w* with one group of countries’ names and *na* with others. Polish dictionaries and manuals of style propose that *na* in the function of *w* (“in”) occurs with the names of (1) city or town districts, (2) regions that are part of a larger and sovereign country (state), (3) with the names of islands (that is, also of those that happen to be sovereign states), (4) and of some sovereign states.

Cases (1) and (4) do not concern us here, as they are a reflection of regular syntactical rules. But to illustrate them, I will give some examples. For instance, in the case of city districts, you can say *na Zaodrze* (“in Zaodrze,” a district in Opole), *na Mariensztacie* (“in Mariensztat,” a district in Warsaw), or *na Kazimierzu* (“in Kazimierz,” a district in Cracow). Likewise, when

referring to islands, you say in Polish *na Kubie* (“in Cuba”), *na Islandii* (“in Iceland”), or *na Sri Lance* (“in Sri Lanka”), which are independent states; but also *na Grenlandii* (“in/on Greenland”), *na Wyspie Man* (“on/in the Isle of Man”), or *na Skye* (“in/on Skye”) that are included within larger states. Interestingly, in the latter case of islands that do not constitute states in their own right, the English preposition “on” can be employed interchangeably with “in.”

For our analysis the most interesting are cases (2) and (3). Regarding the former, in Polish people say *na Mazowszu* (“in Mazovia”), *na Śląsku* (“in Silesia”), or *na Chełmszczyźnie* (“in the Region of the City of Chełm”) when speaking of regions in today’s Poland. But the preposition *na* cannot be used to express the very same meaning with Poland’s core historical regions of *Wielkopolska* (Great[er] Poland) and *Małopolska* (Lesser, or Little Poland) that in their names contain the very name of the state, *Polska* (“Poland”). It is the preposition *w* that is invariably employed to express this meaning, namely, *w Wielkopolsce* (“in Wielkopolska”) and *w Małopolsce* (“in Małopolska”). When talking about regions in other countries one can say *na Syberii* (“in Siberia,” a region in Russia), *na Krymie* (“in Crimea, the region recently seized from Ukraine by Russia), or *na Morawach* (“in Moravia,” a region in the Czech Republic). But it is impossible to use *na* when saying “in Scotland,” “in Westphalia,” or “in Provence.” In Polish these collocations must always be formed with the word *w*, that is, *w Szkocji*, *w Westfalii* and *w Prowansji*.

The most interesting case is the small and unchanging group of current independent states (that are *not* islands) with whose names Polish speakers use the preposition *na*. This group includes: Belarus (*na Białorusi*), Hungary (*na Węgrzech*), Latvia (*na Łotwie*), Lithuania (*na Litwie*), Slovakia (*na Słowacji*) and Ukraine (*na Ukrainie*). I believe that this narrow set of states whose names Polish-speakers precede with the preposition *na* can be plausibly proposed to be a reflection of social and political realities as they obtained during the existence of Poland-Lithuania. Poland-Lithuania was a composite monarchy, composed of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that together constituted a dual Commonwealth. It was founded in 1386 through the personal union of these two polities, which provided that the grand duchy’s Jagiellon dynasty (Jogaila in Lithuanian, Jagiełło in Polish) would ascend to the Polish royal throne. In 1569 the personal union became a real one, yielding the Commonwealth. Poland-Lithuania

was erased from the political map of Europe in the late eighteenth century when the Habsburgs, Prussia and Russia partitioned it out of existence in a piecemeal fashion in 1772, 1792, and finally in 1795.

The Duchy of Poland coalesced in the second half of the tenth century and received its name that first was coined at the imperial court of the Holy Roman Empire in Latin as *Polonia*, shortly after 1000, and only later translated into the land's Slavic idiom as *Polska*.¹ Wielkopolska was its core, to which Małopolska was swiftly added. In this context the use of the preposition *w* when speaking of these two regions in Polish appears to be a sign of respect for the Polish monarchy which was elevated to the status of a kingdom in 1320. The subaltern status of Kuyavia (*na Kujawach*), Mazovia (*na Mazowszu*), Pomerania (*na Pomorzu*) and Silesia (*na Śląsku*) conquered by this "core Poland" at the turn of the eleventh century was expressed by the consistent use of *na* with their names, as opposed to *w* employed with Wielkopolska and Małopolska, and that persists to this day.

During this period of overexpansion at the turn of the second millennium, the Polish rulers also briefly annexed the southwestern corner of Rus' (hence, *na Rusi*), the northwestern section of Hungary (*na Węgrzech*), Moravia (*na Morawach*) from the Czech monarch in Bohemia, and Lusatia (*na Łużycach*) from the Holy Roman Empire. Interestingly, the Polish conquest of a small fragment of Hungary saddled the Polish name of the country with *na* to this day, whereas the similar Polish annexation of half of the lands of the Czech monarch did not have the same effect in relation to Bohemia, whose name is invariably combined with *w* in Polish (*w Czechach*).

Perhaps this is a reflection of how differently the medieval Polish elite perceived the Czech monarchy and Hungary. From the former, the Polish court adopted Christianity in 966, while Hungary officially became a Christian state three decades later in about 1000. In the contemporary Polish eyes, Hungary was "less Christian" or "more pagan" than Poland, and this showed with the use of the preposition *na* when talking of Hungary. Another or parallel explanation rests on the fact that in Hungarian the phrase "in Hungary" is *Magyarországban*. The Hungarian suffix *-on* corresponds to the English preposition "on" or the Polish *na*. This very same preposition was extended also to Rus' because the monarchy adopted Christianity (988) later than Poland, and what was then "even worse," from Constantinople and not from Rome. The great schism of 1054 that sundered the Christian world also deepened Poland's negative perception of Rus'.

When in 1386 a personal union was contracted between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the former was a junior partner in this enterprise, despite enjoying a territory more than twice the size of Poland. Firstly, the Lithuanian dynasty of the Jagiellons were “pagans,” that was ideologically unacceptable in “Christian Europe.” Secondly, Lithuania was *not* and *never* became a kingdom. Thirdly, its territory was composed mostly of Rus’ lands, including the Rus’ capital of Kyiv. These ensured that Polish-speakers would employ *na* with the names of the grand duchy and its provinces, for instance, *na Litwie* (“in Lithuania”), *na Żmudzi* (“in Samogitia”), *na Podlasiu* (“in Podlachia”), *na Białej Rusi* (“in White Rus”), or *na Wołyniu* (“in Volhynia”).

The use of *na* was extended in Polish also to other Rus’ successor polities that were not included within the Polish-Lithuanian borders, most importantly to Muscovy, the forerunner of today’s Russia. The collocation *na Moskwie* (“in Muscovy”) persisted in Polish until the Great Northern War (1700-1721) in which Muscovy defeated Sweden and Poland-Lithuania, thus gaining access to the Baltic littoral, firstly in Ingria, where St. Petersburg was built. In 1721, the Muscovite tsar Peter, who later became known as “the Great,” changed the name of his realm to that of the “Russian Empire.” He also requested Sweden, Poland-Lithuania and Prussia to recognize this change, and his wish was granted. Recognizing Russia as an equal replaced *na* employed in the context of Muscovy with the preposition *w* when speaking of Russia (*w Rosji*).

In the case of Hungary and Moravia, the use of the preposition *na* with their names in Polish was strengthened by the fact that the Jagiellons served as monarchs of both Hungary and the lands of the Czech Crown in the fifteenth and in the early sixteenth centuries. In addition, the southeastward expansion of Poland-Lithuania toward the Black Sea littoral brought Moldavia under Polish control and Walachia under Polish cultural influence. Previously, the two Danubian principalities had been under Hungarian control and had settled for Orthodox Christianity rather than Catholicism, which in the Polish perception made them inferior. Unsurprisingly, Polish speakers used *na* when talking about Walachia (“*na Wołoszczyźnie*”) and Moldavia (“*na Mołdawii*”).

Nowadays, Wallachia and the western half of historical Moldavia are part of Romania (founded in 1866), but the use of preposition *na* was not transferred to the name of this new state, and *w* must be employed (*w*

Rumunii). Interestingly, *na* in collocation with the name of Moldavia became obsolete in Polish, and the preposition *w* is considered to be correct (“*w Moldawii*”), which may be a carryover from the well-established use of this preposition *w* with the name of Russia. Bessarabia—or the eastern half of historical Moldavia, seized in 1812 by Russia from the Ottoman Empire—became a Russian province, and following the breakup of the Soviet Union emerged as an independent state in 1989.

Slovakia was not that lucky. This name for the northern section of historical Hungary (known in Hungarian as *Felvidék*—literally, “Upland”—or “Upper Hungary”) inhabited by Slavic speakers was proposed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Slovakia became a political reality in Czechoslovakia, and after the first period of independence during World War II, it again achieved the status of an independent state in 1993, following the breakup of Czechoslovakia. But unlike in the case of Moldavia, the pesky preposition *na* was passed from Hungary to Slovakia, so Polish speakers still say *na Słowacji*. The tendency is fortified by the Slovaks’ own usage of *na Slovensku* in Slovak to say “in Slovakia.” Interestingly, the Slovak preposition *v* for “in” is used, when saying “in Hungary,” that is, *v Maďarsku*.

The prolonged political competition of Poland-Lithuania, between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, with the Teutonic Order (centered on Prussia), the Livonian Order (centered on Courland and Livonia), Muscovy (Russia) and Sweden along the southern littoral of the Baltic, resulted in Poland-Lithuania’s annexation of Prussia, Courland and Livonia. Not surprisingly, the subject status of these three provinces (fiefs) was marked with the use of the preposition *na* when talking of them in Polish, namely, *na Prusach* (in Prussia), *na Kurlandii* (in Courland) and *na Inflantach* or *na Liwonii* (in Livonia). But the first one, as the Kingdom of Prussia, gained independence from Poland-Lithuania in 1701, and a century later became one of the main players of European politics after having participated in the partitions of Poland-Lithuania and survived the Napoleonic onslaught. This swayed the Polish usage in regard to that polity’s name, and beginning from the nineteenth century it has been usual to speak of *w Prusach*.

No similar development was observed in the case of Courland and Livonia which became Russian provinces, alongside Estland, which St. Petersburg seized from Sweden and Poland-Lithuania in the eighteenth century. Because Poland-Lithuania never possessed Estland, the preposition *w* was used with this initially Swedish (and then Russian) province’s name

(*w Estlandii*). In 1918, Courland and southern Livonia became Latvia, while northern Livonia and Estland yielded Estonia. Courland's and Livonia's *na* stuck in Polish with the former nation-state (*na Lotwie* for 'in Latvia'), while Estland's *w* with the latter (*w Estonii*, for "in Estonia").

Likewise, the well-established employment of *na*, when speaking of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and of Rus', was transferred onto the nation-states of Lithuania (*na Litwie*) and Belarus (*na Białorusi*) that were founded on the former grand duchy's territory. In 1569, when the real union was contracted between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the southern half of the grand duchy passed to the kingdom, where it became known as Rus', or "Ruthenia" in Latin. Obviously, the preposition *na* continued to be employed with the name (*na Rusi*). Later, this usage was transferred to the name "Ukraine." The nascent Ukrainian national movement settled for this name in order to transcend the confusing onomastic duality; the official name of "Ruthenia" for the western Ukrainian lands in Austria-Hungary and that of "Little Russia" for their eastern half in the Russian Empire. Ukraine gained the first short-lived period of independence in 1918-22, which did not register in the Polish usage that maintained the preposition *na* with the state's name (*na Ukrainie*). Obviously in Ukrainian the preposition *v* (corresponding to the Polish *w*) is employed: *v Ukraini*.

The Polish use of *na*, when talking of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine became solidified in interwar Poland. Following the Polish-Soviet War (1919-21), the Belarusian and Ukrainian lands were partitioned between Poland and Bolshevik Russia (or, since 1922, the Soviet Union). In 1920, Poland also annexed the southeastern corner of Lithuania with today's Lithuanian capital of Vilnius. These lands, accounting for slightly more than half of interwar Poland's territory, were collectively referred to as the Kresy ("Borderlands"). Not surprisingly the preposition *na* was employed to say "in the Borderlands" (*na Kresach*).

The Hungarians and the Czechs with their well-developed historical consciousness of their history and statehood apparently do not care about the Polish *na* employed with the names of Hungary (*na Węgrzech*) and of the Czech regions of Moravia (*na Morawach*) and Silesia (*na Śląsku*). I have not heard of any Slovak intellectuals criticizing Poland for sticking to the preposition *na* with the name of Slovakia (*na Słowacji*), but it may be due to the fact that they have a bigger axe to grind with the Hungarians rather than care about how Poles refer to Slovakia in Polish.

The situation is different in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, where many can read and speak in Polish. They see this Polish persistence in the employment of *na vis-à-vis* the names of their countries (*na Litwie*, *na Białorusi* and *na Ukrainie*) as a sign of the unjustified and unjust preservation of Polish colonial attitudes to Poland's eastern neighbors. Certainly, in today's Poland no one seriously considers annexing Lithuania, Belarus or Ukraine as "old Polish lands," but when reading for an M.A. in the late 1980s at the University of Silesia in Katowice, it was not uncommon for groups of students to break into a wartime song proposing to "recapture Polish Wilno" (Vilnius) and "Polish Lwów" (Lviv), before pressing on to Soviet Leningrad (St Petersburg).

Likewise, the Polish stereotype about the "inferiority" of Lithuanians, Belarusians and Ukrainians continues in subtle ways that are the more insidious because they appear to be part and parcel of Polish culture and language. In reply to the Lithuanian, Belarusian and Ukrainian criticism voiced against this continued employment of the preposition *na*, most Polish intellectuals and linguists reply that it is nothing more than an established usage with no negative meaning implied or intended. I beg to differ, for neither a language nor a usage is a destiny. Should such a usage offend, as the preposition *na* does in the cases analyzed above, humans who create, speak and control languages can change such usages. And the speakers of the Polish language are capable of such an alteration, as well. During the last two decades the way to do this was shown by the ten-times-bigger group of English speakers who developed and use gender-neutral forms for the sake of equality and objectivity, and who also switched from saying "the Ukraine" to simply "Ukraine."

It is high time Polish speakers tried to be good neighbors and made an effort to replace the implicated preposition *na* with the neutral *w* for saying *w Litwie* ("in Lithuania"), *w Białorusi* ("in Belarus"), *w Ukrainie* ("in Ukraine"), and also *w Łotwie* ("in Latvia"), *w Słowacji* ("in Slovakia") and *w Węgrzech* ("in Hungary"). Neither the past, nor stereotypes, nor—least of all—old-fashioned linguistic usages should weigh down Poland's good relations with these countries.

And why is this story brought to the attention of the international Anglophone reader? I believe that reflection on the use of these two Polish prepositions *w* and *na* and their implications provides a good example of how past events, attitudes and stereotypes are built into languages that we

speak and write and how these subtexts and shades of meanings of which we remain unaware influence our thinking on the social reality around us. Pursuing the Foucauldian archeology of knowledge by paying close attention to various mechanisms employed in a language for mapping and inventing reality may yield interesting discoveries and conclusions.

Most importantly, these prove that languages are not neutral lenses through which we perceive the world, but that they are often quite distorting. These distortions stem from various historical processes and events that have shaped our languages. Tracing and analyzing their origin and impact on our perception of reality may serve as an important and welcome corrective. On the other hand, it may help us see more clearly how the linguistic, the political and the social interact, which is a methodological reward in itself—the reward of interdisciplinarity.

RESUMÉ

(Kamusella, Tomasz)

Przyimek „na” a Rzeczpospolita Królestwa Polskiego i Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego

W języku polskim przyimek miejsca „w” jest używany z większością nazw państw świata. Jakkolwiek w tej funkcji występuje też przyimek „na” w kontekście małej i ograniczonej grupy państw najczęściej graniczących z Polska, lub leżących w jej pobliżu. Zazwyczaj się uważa, że użycie te jest wypadkową rozwoju języka polskiego, bez żadnych podtekstów ideologicznych. Zastanawia jednak, że przyimek „na” występuje prawie wyłącznie z nazwami państw, które kiedyś wchodziły w skład wspomnianej w tytule Rzeczypospolitej. Przyimek „na” najczęściej stosuje się z nazwami regionów i prowincji wewnątrz jakiegoś państwa. Stąd wydaje się, że używanie „na” w połączeniu z nazwami takich niepodległych państw jak Białoruś lub Ukraina wykazuje jednak ideologiczne zabarwienie, bowiem z językowego punktu widzenia nic nie stoi na przeszkodzie, aby po polsku mówić „w Białorusi” lub „w Ukrainie”.