

OXFORD  
LINGUISTICS

# SMALL DICTIONARIES & CURIOSITY

*Lexicography & Fieldwork in  
Post-Medieval Europe*



JOHN CONSIDINE

## Small Dictionaries and Curiosity



# Small Dictionaries and Curiosity

*Lexicography and Fieldwork  
in Post-Medieval Europe*

John Considine

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

# OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,  
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.

It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,  
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of  
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

© John Considine 2017

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

First Edition published in 2017

Impression: 1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in  
a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the  
prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted  
by law, by licence or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics  
rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the  
above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the  
address above

You must not circulate this work in any other form  
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press  
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016942050

ISBN 978-0-19-878501-9

Printed in Great Britain by  
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Links to third party websites are provided by Oxford in good faith and  
for information only. Oxford disclaims any responsibility for the materials  
contained in any third party website referenced in this work.

*For Nicholas*



# Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Conventions</i>	xi

1. Introduction	1
-----------------	---

## Part I. Curiosity

2. Western lexicographers in the lands of the Mongols	11
3. Curiosity and lexicography from Petrarch to Leibniz	15
4. The history of lexicography and the history of curiosity	21

## Part II. The long sixteenth century

5. The first curiosity-driven wordlists: Rotwelsch	33
6. The broadening tradition: Wordlists of other cryptolects	43
7. The curiosity-driven lexicography of a whole language: Romani	57
8. Weakly codified languages and lexicography in the sixteenth century	67
9. Curiosity-driven lexicography in the sixteenth century	73

## Part III. The long seventeenth century

10. Languages and regional varieties	95
11. Natural history and lexicography: John Ray and his friends	99
12. Ray's <i>Collection of English Words</i>	107
13. Ray's German contemporaries and successors	115
14. Edward Lhuyd: The making of a lexicographer	121
15. Edward Lhuyd, travelling lexicographer	127
16. Edward Lhuyd's <i>Glossography</i>	137

## Part IV. The long eighteenth century

17. Polyglot collections from Gessner to Leibniz	149
18. Witsen, Leibniz, and the turn to Inner Eurasia	153
19. Strahlenberg and the lexicography of Inner Eurasia	157



20. Early wordlists of Scandinavian regionalisms	163
21. Early wordlists of Finnish and Sámi	167
22. Johan Ihre and Swedish lexicography	173
23. Dying languages	181
24. Old Prussian and Polabian	185
25. Cornish and Manx	193

## **Part V. Into the nineteenth century**

26. Dictionaries of Scottish Gaelic in the century of Ossian	205
27. Bardic dictionaries: Faroese, Serbian, and Breton	217
28. Lexicography and national epic in Finland	229
<i>Conclusion: Writing the history of lexicography</i>	237
<i>Appendix: Language varieties</i>	243
<i>Bibliography</i>	267
<i>Index</i>	305

# Acknowledgements

This book develops ideas which I began to work out when I was an assistant editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, learning how to be a lexicographer, and how to think about lexicography, from Edmund Weiner and John Simpson. I am very grateful to them for all they taught me, as I am to other colleagues from my days at *OED* and my subsequent relationship with it as an external consultant, particularly Philip Durkin, Anthony Esposito, Peter Gilliver, Simon Hunt, and Samantha Schad.

My work is still shaped by what I learned before I came to *OED*, from many teachers, notably Andrew Wilson of Bedford Modern School; Tony Cockshut, the late Robin Robbins, Michael Screech, and Nigel Smith of the University of Oxford; and my parents. More recently, some of my most concentrated learning has taken place at the conferences of the International Association for Historical Lexicography and Lexicology: I would like to thank their organizers, Julie Coleman, Giovanni Iamartino, Marijke Mooijaart and Marijke van der Wal, Charlotte Brewer, Bettina Bock and Maria Kozianka, and Alicia Rodríguez-Álvarez. Among the other colleagues from whom I have learned most are Michael Adams, Fred Dolezal, Konrad Koerner, Rod McConchie, Kusujiro Miyoshi, Marek Stachowski, Toon Van Hal, and Otto Zwartjes. I am grateful to David Cram, Adam Fox, Jon Mills, Notis Toufexis, and Toon Van Hal for sending me primary and secondary materials which I needed. I owe a particular debt to the book dealers and auctioneers whose catalogues, often prodigally generous in imparting learning far beyond what was needed to sell the books they described, I have studied over the years, among them Ian Jackson, Rob Rulon-Miller, Karen Thomson, and John and Shahin Wilbraham. I am very grateful to Julia Steer of Oxford University Press for her support of this book, to Vicki Sunter of Oxford University Press, and to the two anonymous readers for the press whose meticulous and thoughtful reports have improved it. It has, finally, benefited from a reading of the whole text by Raf Van Rooy, and from the impeccable copy-editing of Kim Allen.

Some of the foundational work on this project was supported by a Standard Research Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), for which I am most grateful, as I am to Kris Calhoun, Leona Erl, Susan Howard, and Anna Minarchi of the University of Alberta, who helped me to administer it. The department of English at the University of Alberta has given me a stable working environment, and my students there have helped me learn how to write. Some of the first ideas for the book were presented in a departmental talk many years ago. I am, as always, warmly appreciative of the support of the University of Alberta Libraries, not least the Inter-Library Loan division, and of the many librarians across and beyond North America who have sent me books and photocopies through the inter-library loan service.

Parts of this book owe their existence to periods reading in the Bodleian Library, where I owe a special debt to the staff of Duke Humfrey's Library, and in the British Library, and to shorter visits to the Kongelige Bibliothek in Copenhagen and the libraries of Magdalen College and Queen's College in Oxford. I am most grateful to all the librarians who have given me access to the collections in their care.

Other parts of the book are indebted to the librarians across the world, from Aberystwyth to Zürich (providers respectively of page images of the manuscript of Edward Lhuyd's Cornish wordlist and of Conrad Gessner's *'Horti Germaniae'*), who have made images of books in their possession freely available online, and to their allies in this great public service. I am particularly aware of my debt to Google Books (especially in its collaborations with the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich and the Taylorian Institution in Oxford); to the Internet Archive; to the Gallica service of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; and to the digitization projects coordinated by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. It would be churlish to overlook Wikipedia and Google Maps, which have been invaluable first resources for hundreds of simple factual questions.

My wife, Sylvia Brown, and my son, Nicholas Brown-Considine, have supported me in the writing of this book and in everything else.

# Conventions

In transcriptions from primary sources, I have sought to retain original spelling and punctuation, with the following exceptions. Most contractions have been expanded in square brackets; in Latin and French, & has been silently expanded to *et*. In Latin, diacritics have been omitted, and the digraphs æ and œ have been expanded (except in a few words such as *Færoense*, where the æ represents the use of the same letter in Danish *Færøsk*). In Germanic languages, superscript e has been normalized to umlaut. In the titles of books, I have reduced capitals to lower-case: where capital V corresponds to lower-case u, as in LINGVA, I have reduced it to lower-case u. All italics in quotations are original and all ellipses in quotations are mine. Translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

A number of quotations are from the unpaginated preliminaries of early printed books. These are given by signature, a system with which some but not all readers of this book will be familiar. If, for instance, the first gathering of four leaves in a book is unpaginated, but the second leaf has the letter A and the number 2 (or ii, or ij) printed at its foot, a quotation from the recto of that leaf will be identified as from sig. A2r, a quotation from the verso facing it will be identified as from sig. A1v, and a quotation from the verso of the last leaf of the gathering will be identified as from sig. A4v. Preliminary gatherings are sometimes identified by a typographical symbol such as \* or )(rather than a letter, and so I give some references in forms like sig. \*3r or sig. )(2v. Where preliminary gatherings are unsigned, it is sometimes possible to supply a signature: an unsigned gathering before gathering B is gathering [A]. Otherwise, the first gathering is conventionally assigned the signature  $\pi$  and the second unsigned and unpaginated gathering, if there is one, is assigned the signature  $2\pi$ . So, when a footnote identifies a passage as, for instance, from sigs. )(2r–)(3v of a given book, this is not a typesetting error: the first gathering of the book is not paginated, but its leaves are marked with a signature of back-to-back parentheses, and the footnote refers to a passage which begins on the recto of the second leaf of this gathering and ends on the verso of the third leaf.

Personal names, place-names, and the names of languages have been given in the forms which seemed natural or appropriate, and this has doubtless led me into many inconsistencies. In the case of place-names, I have had an eye to the persons whom I mention as connected with a certain place: Dithmar von Meckebach, for instance, was a German-speaking chancellor of a particular duchy, and so, in a remark about him, I have given the duchy's German name, Breslau, before its Polish name, Wrocław. As in this case, I have given alternative forms of names where I thought it might be helpful, but I have not attempted to give all the possible forms of every name. I have generally been guided by the usage of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and

the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* for the names of their subjects, and by the usage of Glanville Price's *Encyclopedia of the Languages of Europe* for the names of languages and language families; E. F. K. Koerner's *Universal Index of Biographical Names in the Language Sciences* has been a most valuable resource.

I have regularly consulted the standard biographical dictionaries and the online British Book Trade Index for personal information; the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the other standard dictionaries of European languages for lexical information; and the standard bibliographies and online library catalogues (especially the English Short Title Catalogue, COPAC, WorldCat, and the catalogues available through the Karlsruhe Virtueller Katalog) for bibliographical information. I have only indicated my use of such sources where it seemed strictly necessary.

In footnotes and bibliography, I have not normally differentiated between original copies, printed facsimiles, and digital reproductions of early printed books: in many cases, I have used a given book in multiple forms over the years. I have, however, tried to make it clear in what form I have consulted manuscripts and distinctive copies of early printed books. The manuscripts and distinctive copies of early printed books which I have consulted directly—whether in the original copy or in a complete, unedited photographic reproduction—are listed in the first section of the bibliography.

# 1

## Introduction

‘Let him make dictionaries,’ wrote the learned Joseph Justus Scaliger, imagining a sentence of penal servitude more laborious than condemnation to the workhouse or the mine.<sup>1</sup> The words belong to a poem which he added to his own pioneering Arabic dictionary, and which struck a chord with other lexicographers after its posthumous publication in Scaliger’s collected verse: they were printed by Johannes Buxtorf the younger at the beginning of his father’s *Lexicon Chaldaicum* of 1639, in the preface to Johann Heinrich Hottinger’s *Etymologicum orientale* of 1661, in the preface to the Gothic glossary issued with Franciscus Junius and Thomas Marshall’s edition of the Gothic Bible of 1684, as the punchline of one of the attacks by the lexicographer Antoine Furetière on the Académie française in 1685, at the end of the preface of the French–Dutch dictionary published by Claud Rouxel and François Halma in 1686, and so on.<sup>2</sup> The people who quoted Scaliger’s verses had all compiled or edited wordlists—I use this term to refer neutrally to free-standing book-length dictionaries and also to shorter glossaries and vocabularies—and although they all thought that this was a laborious task, they had all undertaken it for good reasons. Scholarly dictionaries of Arabic, Aramaic, or other languages would enhance the reputation of the maker if they were appreciated by other scholars, and those which supported Biblical scholarship were also meritorious as contributions to the life of the Christian churches. Dictionaries of modern languages, whether monolingual like the French dictionary which Furetière hoped to publish in 1685 or bilingual like Rouxel and Halma’s of the following year, might sell well enough to be financially profitable. Wordlists which documented languages of the past such as Gothic might bring prestige not only to the lexicographer but also to the nation which claimed a given language as part of its heritage. So, a number of lexicographical traditions flourished in Scaliger’s Europe because dictionaries, laborious as their compilation might be, were directly or indirectly profitable to their makers.

There was also a very extensive tradition of compiling wordlists—a few long enough to be published as free-standing dictionaries, but others much shorter—which were based on spoken usage rather than on the prestigious written languages of the present or the past, and which were not made for practical reasons such as learning or deciphering

<sup>1</sup> Scaliger, *Poemata* 35 (no. 39, ‘In lexicorum compilatores, inscriptum lexico Arabico a se collecto, in Batavis’), ‘Lexica contextat’.

<sup>2</sup> Buxtorf, *Lexicon Chaldaicum* sig. (\*)1v; Hottinger, *Etymologicum orientale* sig. b4r; Junius, ‘Gothicum glossarium’ sig. \*\*\*1r; Furetière, *Factum* 160; Rouxel and Halma, *Dictionnaire nouveau* sig. \*4v.

foreign languages. They are the subject of this book. None of these wordlists was as long as the longest dictionaries based on written usage, but compiling them was not easy: it always called for initiative at the least, and it was sometimes decidedly laborious. It naturally tended to be unprofitable in financial terms, and indeed, many of the wordlists which we will examine were not intended for printed publication. They seem to have been compiled because their makers were *curious* about the language varieties they documented, a point to which we shall return.

To be sure, a hard line cannot be drawn between practical and curiosity-driven lexicography. The latter might provide evidence for the interrelationship of languages, or might help to assert an individual's personal identity as a speaker of a given language, or might serve a larger community's sense of collective identity. Conversely, practical dictionaries such as the subject-ordered Latin dictionaries used in schoolrooms were not relentlessly practical. Some of them show signs of a sort of encyclopaedic exuberance in their collections of words on particular topics: their compilers, as Werner Hüllen remarked, 'seem to be enchanted by the inherent systematicity of their semantic organization and are lured into a perfection and exhaustiveness which overshoots lexicographical purposes'.<sup>3</sup> For instance, they regularly include names for numerous species of birds which are neither edible nor of literary significance, such as the sixty-seven, including wagtail, reed-sparrow, sparrow, fieldfare, and bunting, in the Latin-English wordlist called the *Mayer Nominale*, an example of 'how much *world* is incorporated' in classed wordlists of its kind.<sup>4</sup> So, although I hope to sketch a tradition of curiosity-driven lexicography which was not primarily intended to satisfy the simple demands of the schoolroom, the trading mission, or the work of evangelization, I know that the tradition shades into the traditions of pedagogical dictionaries, or merchants' phrasebooks, or missionary wordlists.

Likewise, a hard line can not be drawn between fieldwork-based lexicography and library-based lexicography. The extreme cases contrast neatly with each other, but very often, field notes would be used to supplement information from books, or vice versa. In a work like Martin Crusius' dictionary of modern Greek, where many of the headwords were selected by Crusius in the course of his reading but then discussed with illiterate native-speaker informants, while other headwords were directly from oral information, fieldwork and reading are inextricably intertwined. Very few of the wordlists which I discuss below were made exclusively from written sources. Some of those which were, for instance Bonaventura Vulcanius' Basque wordlist or Nicolaas Witsen's Kalmyk wordlist, used texts which were themselves close to the spoken word. Others, for instance Johan Ihre's specimen wordlists of Biblical Gothic, are mentioned because they were closely associated with field lexicography, in this case the wordlists of Swedish regionalisms which were brought together and published by Ihre.

<sup>3</sup> Hüllen, *English Dictionaries* 15.

<sup>4</sup> Wright and Wülcker, *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies* cols. 675–744 at cols. 701–3 (for this wordlist, see Franzen, 'Introduction' xli); Hüllen, *English Dictionaries* 69.

The wordlists which we will examine in this book were compiled in Europe, from the late fifteenth century to the nineteenth. By *Europe*, I mean an area excluding Greenland and Asia Minor, but including the north Atlantic islands from Iceland to the British Isles; the Mediterranean islands; and all the continental lands which extend eastwards from the Atlantic coast as far as, and including, the Turkish empire west of the Bosphorus and the Russian empire west of the Urals. The Russian empire is defined as it stood at the end of the eighteenth century, thus excluding both the Caucasus (indeed, the two languages of that area which were best known across Europe, namely Armenian and Georgian, were surely regarded as Oriental languages rather than European languages by those who studied them) and also the territories to the east of the Caspian Sea which are now part of Kazakhstan.<sup>5</sup>

Although many of the small dictionaries from oral sources which were made in the period covered by this book were of languages which Europeans first encountered outside Europe, and although the encounters with some of these languages influenced European lexicography, this material is kept to the periphery of my discussion. The challenges and achievements of lexicography by Europeans in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australia and the Pacific were very various, and often very different from those of work within Europe. In many cases, the wordlists which were produced demand specialized investigation before they can be understood in a broader framework.<sup>6</sup> In the case of Asian languages, there are also native traditions of lexicography to be considered. It is not yet time to write a book documenting the European lexicography of the languages of the world from the wordlists of the first explorers, through those of traders and, in particular, missionaries in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, and into the wonderfully dynamic activity of the nineteenth. The geographical scope of this book is much more modest, but large enough.

Because this book ranges widely, its chapters are short: that seemed like the best way to help the reader see both the individual integrity of the stories it tells, and also the way in which they build into a coherent whole. These short chapters fall into natural groups, so the book is divided into five parts, as follows.

Part I, 'Curiosity', draws a contrast between the functional and largely incurious work of medieval lexicographers and the seventeenth-century use of lexicography as a way to satisfy curiosity about languages, and asking when and why curiosity-driven lexicography began. Within it, Chapter Two introduces the *Codex Cumanicus*, a remarkable collection of short wordlists of the Turkic language Cuman and of Persian, made in the early fourteenth century by Genoese traders and German-speaking missionaries in the khanate of the Golden Horde, to the north of the Black Sea, and preserved in a single manuscript, which is now in Venice. It is remarkable because, alone among the dictionaries and wordlists of fourteenth-century Latin Christendom, it occasionally

<sup>5</sup> Price, *Encyclopedia of the Languages of Europe* xi–xii defines a very similar area for slightly different reasons.

<sup>6</sup> For advances in the field between 2002 and 2012, see Zwartjes, 'Historiography of missionary linguistics' 202–3.



shows its compilers' curiosity about the language varieties they documented. Chapter Three takes up this point, discussing the place of the Codex Cumanicus in the imagination of the philosopher Leibniz, who heard about it at the end of the seventeenth century, although he never managed to see it or have it transcribed for him. He believed that the Codex Cumanicus had formerly belonged to Petrarch, and I set out the contrast between the keen curiosity with which Leibniz and many of his contemporaries approached foreign languages and the linguistic incuriosity of Petrarch and the vast majority of his contemporaries. Chapter Four then takes up the subject of this contrast, asking when the curiosity about languages of which we see early glimmerings in the Codex Cumanicus started to drive the making—necessarily on the basis of fieldwork, often undertaken in the course of travel—and circulation of whole wordlists of previously undocumented or poorly documented European languages. The answer seems to be the late fifteenth century.

Part II turns to the curiosity-driven lexicography of what may be called the long sixteenth century. Chapter Five proposes that the first curiosity-driven wordlists to be made and circulated in Europe documented a language variety called Rotwelsch. This was a cryptolect: not an autonomous language with its own full vocabulary and grammar, but a set of words and phrases which could be used within a natural language for the purposes of concealment. The users of Rotwelsch were thieves and vagabonds; the natural language from which Rotwelsch was an outgrowth was German; the first wordlists of Rotwelsch were made in the fourteenth century for the purposes of social control, and wordlists related to them were first copied and circulated out of curiosity in the second half of the fifteenth century, in German-speaking Switzerland. Thereafter, a vigorous tradition of Rotwelsch lexicography, partly but not entirely derivative, continued to the early eighteenth century, where we leave it, and beyond. Chapter Six surveys the early lexicography of other cryptolects, again up to the early eighteenth century. The Italian *gergo* was already the object of curiosity-driven lexicography, imitating Swiss models, during the fifteenth century; the French *jargon* or *argot* was recorded for judicial purposes in the fifteenth century and for the sake of curiosity in the sixteenth; the English variety called 'cant' was recorded in a context of social control in the sixteenth century, but was soon being recorded and circulated because it was interesting. Chapter Seven then turns from cryptolects to a language, Romani, which was an object of very early lexicographical interest for some of the same reasons as the cryptolects: it was spoken by travellers, so it was more novel and exotic to its hearers than the languages of settled neighbouring communities, and because those travellers were not always law-abiding, it was of interest to enforcers of the law. By the seventeenth century, Romani was also of interest to scholars who sought to compare different languages with each other.

The curiosity-driven fieldwork lexicography of other European languages originated soon after that of the cryptolects and Romani, and in the course of the sixteenth century, a number of wordlists were undertaken. Chapter Eight explores the languages which were known to sixteenth-century Europeans but were not so strongly codified

as to make fieldwork lexicography redundant, using criteria such as the availability of printed grammars to establish the latter point, and using Conrad Gessner's language survey *Mithridates* (1555) as a guide to the former. Then Chapter Nine discusses the lexicographical treatment in the sixteenth century of the weakly codified languages which were noticed in *Mithridates* and were documented in at least one wordlist: Basque, Croatian, modern Greek, Irish (with Scots and Scottish Gaelic), Lithuanian (with Latvian and Old Prussian), Russian, and Turkish. It concludes with a brief note on Crimean Gothic, which is noticed only in the revised second edition of *Mithridates* in 1610.

All of the language varieties whose lexicography is discussed in Chapter Nine have a strong claim to be called languages in their own right rather than regional varieties of languages (I avoid the word *dialect*, which does not apply equally well to all the local language varieties discussed in the period). In Part III, which covers the long seventeenth century, the narrative turns first to the study of regional language varieties and then to the comparative study of languages, with particular attention to those which we now see as belonging to a Celtic language family. Within it, Chapter Ten introduces the early modern interest in the non-standard varieties of languages for which a standard was developing. This took lexicographical form in the seventeenth century. It was associated with close attention to the survey of other local phenomena, and particularly of local natural history. The next three chapters discuss some of the early lexicographical surveys of local language varieties. The subject of Chapter Eleven is the set of wordlists made by John Ray, Francis Willughby, and Philip Skippon in the course of fieldwork in the British Isles, continental Europe, and Malta in the 1660s; these documented languages such as spoken Welsh, Basque, Romansh, and Maltese. These wordlists can be contextualized both in Ray and Willughby's botanical fieldwork, and in the interest of the Royal Society of London, of which they were both members, in language and local studies alike. Chapter Twelve turns to Ray's collection of English regionalisms, the first attempt to publish a dictionary which surveyed all the regional varieties of any European language, with particular attention to the early readers who supplemented their copies by annotation. Chapter Thirteen then discusses the first wordlists of German regionalisms, which began to be undertaken contemporaneously with Ray's work on local languages (with the lexicography of Low German as a whole as a sixteenth-century forerunner), but developed, unlike the lexicography of English regionalisms, into a very fruitful eighteenth-century tradition. The region surveyed might be as small as a single city, as in the case of Michael Richey's successful dictionary of the usage of Hamburg.

Chapter Fourteen introduces the Welsh naturalist, lexicographer, and comparative philologist Edward Lhuyd, taking his intellectual development from his first publication in the 1680s to the eve of his departure on a great survey expedition of the British Isles, which lasted from 1697 to 1701. Chapter Fifteen then discusses the expedition itself, in the course of which Lhuyd made important field wordlists of Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Cornish, bringing these together with his knowledge of Welsh, and with

the study of wordlists of Breton and Manx, to arrive at the first serious demonstration of the affinity of all these languages. The principal subject of Chapter Sixteen is the book—*Glossography* (1707), the first and only volume of an intended *Archaeologia Britannica*—in which Lhuyd brought some of his materials on language together as a collection of comparative wordlists, grammars, and other texts; discussed beside it are a Scottish Gaelic wordlist which Lhuyd saw through the press, accompanied by his first printed statement of the affinity of the Celtic languages, and the Breton wordlists by Paul Pezron which formed part of an influential alternative vision of the Celtic past.

Part IV turns to some of the curiosity-driven lexicography of the long eighteenth century, with particular attention to work done in Inner Eurasia and Scandinavia, and among the speakers of dying languages in northern Europe. Lhuyd is the subject of this book's most sustained case study, extending over the three chapters with which Part III closes, because his lexicographical fieldwork was so fruitfully connected with his study of other dictionaries and wordlists, so interestingly connected with the field studies he undertook as a natural historian and antiquary, and so well documented. His work in the British Isles contrasts with the much wider-ranging study of languages made possible by the polyglot linguistic data collections compiled by Conrad Gessner and two traditions of his successors. One of these traditions follows Gessner in collecting translations of the Lord's Prayer; the other, which Leibniz came to see as preferable, collects wordlists. These traditions are the subject of Chapter Seventeen, which opens Part IV. Chapter Eighteen discusses the wordlists obtained by the Dutch virtuoso Nicolaas Witsen and published in the two editions of his compendious treatment of Inner Eurasia, *Noord en Oost Tartarye*, in 1692 and 1705. The European languages which they documented were all from the Russian empire: Crimean Tatar, Kalmyk, Mordvin, and Nenets. Witsen's own knowledge of eastern Europe was real, but not extensive, and he did not collect his own wordlists; by contrast, the Swedish army officer Philipp Johann von Strahlenberg, whose lexicographical work is the subject of Chapter Nineteen, was a prisoner of war in Russia from 1709 to 1722, and used this grim experience as an opportunity to develop the polyglot lexicography of the languages of Inner Eurasia even further than Witsen, compiling or acquiring a substantial new wordlist of Kalmyk and working in the field to compile shorter, but also new, wordlists of the European languages Komi, Mordvin, Mari, Nenets, and Udmurt, together with Hungarian, Finnish, Kalmyk again, and a wide range of Asian languages.

Later in the eighteenth century, the fieldwork lexicography of the languages of the Russian empire tended to be oriented towards Siberia, beyond its European limits. The Scandinavian monarchies of Sweden and Denmark also offered excellent opportunities for lexicographical fieldwork. Chapter Twenty discusses some of the first surveys of regionalisms in Denmark and Sweden, from the late seventeenth century to 1743. Chapter Twenty-One then turns to the discovery, from the sixteenth century until the middle of the eighteenth, of two of the other languages of Sweden and Denmark, namely Finnish (Finland was until the nineteenth century part of the kingdom of Sweden) and Sámi, spoken in the north of Sweden and Norway (which was part of the

kingdom of Denmark). The central figure of Chapter Twenty-Two, the Swedish philologist Johan Ihre, compiled a dictionary of Swedish regionalisms as well as an ample etymological dictionary of Swedish and wordlists of Biblical Gothic; he also wrote the introduction to a Sámi dictionary. The full range of eighteenth-century Swedish lexicography, from curiosity-driven fieldwork to the study of ancient manuscripts, comes together in his career.

Much of the lexicographical fieldwork of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries took the form of surveys of the language varieties encountered on a given itinerary, or spoken in a given area, or even, in the rather exceptional case of the work of Edward Lhuyd, belonging to a given family. By the late seventeenth century, it was understood that a language might fall out of use, or in other words die, and Chapter Twenty-Three introduces the emerging concept of language death and the lexicography of dying European languages. Chapter Twenty-Four discusses the last wordlists of Old Prussian to be circulated at the end of the seventeenth century, and the lexicography of Polabian, an isolated Slavonic language spoken not far from Lüneburg in northern Germany, as it died in the first half of the eighteenth century. One of the Polabian wordlists was made by an exceptional lexicographer, a farmer called Johann Parum Schultze, who appears to have been the first native speaker of a dying language to document it in the awareness of its impending death. Chapter Twenty-Five turns to Cornish, which became extinct in the second half of the eighteenth century, and Manx, which survived into the twentieth but was already seen as declining in the eighteenth. Its first lexicographer, John Kelly, a native speaker of Manx, hoped, in contrast to Schultze, that one of his dictionaries would contribute to the decline and extinction of the language.

By the eighteenth century, the opportunities for fieldwork lexicography in Europe were decreasing; languages which had still been undocumented at the beginning of the sixteenth century were developing literary traditions, and their lexicography was becoming increasingly bookish. There were, however, still languages without written traditions, and some of them had for that reason retained strong traditions of orally transmitted poetry. They are the subject of the three chapters gathered in Part V, which takes the narrative of the book into the nineteenth century. Chapter Twenty-Six discusses the close relationship between eighteenth-century Scottish Gaelic lexicography and the recovery of traditional Scottish Gaelic poetry, particularly as it was refracted in the Ossianic corpus of heroic poetry—this was written in English, but based on Gaelic poetry, and marketed misleadingly as translated from orally transmitted Gaelic epics. Chapter Twenty-Seven examines three further cases of the relationship between lexicographical fieldwork and song-collecting fieldwork: the Faroese researches of the pastor's son Jens Christian Svabo, the Serbian researches of the farmer's son Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, and the Breton researches of the aristocrat Théodore Hersart de La Villemarqué. The last of these compiled a much-loved national epic from a ballad tradition, somewhat in the Ossianic manner. Chapter Twenty-Eight discusses the relationship between Finnish lexicography and song-collecting, which culminated in the assembling of the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*, by Elias Lönnrot, whose fieldwork

also led him to be the compiler of the definitive Finnish dictionary of the nineteenth century.

The stories of Karadžić, La Villemarqué, and Lönnrot conclude this book because they are such interesting developments of earlier traditions. But the stories of many of their contemporaries are beyond its scope. After the end of the eighteenth century, the study of language in Europe changed rapidly, partly as a result of the institutionalization of the language sciences and partly as a result of developments in the understanding of the relationships between languages.<sup>7</sup> The perceived relationship between language and ethnic or national identity also changed dramatically. Hence, lexicography coloured by nineteenth-century comparative philology or by nineteenth-century nationalism seems to me to be significantly different from the lexicography of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. There are, to be sure, more continuities between the wordlists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than there are between those of the fifteenth and sixteenth. But telling the story of those continuities together with the discontinuities from which they cannot be separated would call for a drastic change in the scale and focus of this book. So it is that I make no attempt to discuss the whole efflorescence of the field study of emerging national languages, and of newly valued regionalisms, which is such a spectacular part of the history of nineteenth-century European lexicography. Instead, I comment briefly in a conclusion on a few of this book's main historical and historiographical themes, with reference to its two predecessors, my *Dictionaries in Early Modern Europe* (2008) and *Academy Dictionaries 1600–1800* (2014); the present volume is independent from these two, but they have enough points in common to be discussed briefly together.

An appendix offers an alphabetical listing of all the languages and language families mentioned in the book, with brief notes on their affinities as they are now understood, and, in the case of individual languages, on their use and status between about 1500 and about 1800.

<sup>7</sup> Morpurgo Davies, *Nineteenth-Century Linguistics* 1–58.

# PART I

## Curiosity



## 2

# Western lexicographers in the lands of the Mongols

The most fascinating and exotic of all the wordlists made by people from medieval Latin Christendom are surely those preserved in a fourteenth-century volume in the Bibliotheca Marciana in Venice, known as the *Codex Cumanicus*.<sup>1</sup> The most important of the wordlists in this volume give medieval Latin forms with equivalents in Persian and the Turkic language Cuman. Others give Latin forms with Cuman equivalents, Cuman forms with German equivalents, and Cuman forms with Latin equivalents.<sup>2</sup> Their compilers were Genoese and Germans, active to the north of the Black Sea, in lands which were at the time part of the vast expanse of the realms of the Mongols, ruled by the khans of the Golden Horde, the senior line of the descendants of Chingis Khan. The concept of ‘Europe’ was not as important in the world of these compilers as it would become by the end of the sixteenth century, and so we will call them simply Westerners: they came from the lands to the west of the Mongol realms.<sup>3</sup>

These Westerners had two reasons for their interest in the languages of the khanate. On the one hand, Genoese traders had been doing business with the peoples of the khanate since the mid-thirteenth century. On the other, Roman Catholic missionaries had been active in the lands of the Mongols as early as the journeys of Giovanni da Pian del Carpine in the 1240s, and their activity had continued in missions such as those of Willem van Ruysbroeck and Blessed Odorico da Pordenone in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The languages registered in the *Codex Cumanicus* wordlists were particularly important for both Western groups. Traders needed Persian, which was used as a *lingua franca* over a great area of the Mongol world, from China to Yemen.<sup>4</sup> Its currency was known to travellers such as Willem van Ruysbroeck, who remarked that he had encountered ‘Saracens who spoke Persian’ in a town near Lake Balkhash, in what is now eastern Kazakhstan, ‘a very long way from

<sup>1</sup> *Codex Cumanicus* (1880) is an edition; *Codex Cumanicus* (1936) is an enlarged photographic reproduction.

<sup>2</sup> There is a handy table of contents at *Codex Cumanicus* (1936) 11–12. ‘Cuman’ is something of a shorthand: multiple Cuman language varieties are represented in the *Codex Cumanicus* wordlists, as noted in Golden, ‘*Codex Cumanicus*’ 35 and Vásáry, ‘Oriental languages of the *Codex Cumanicus*’ 123.

<sup>3</sup> Considine, ‘Genealogical narratives and European identity’ 63–7.

<sup>4</sup> Vásáry, ‘Oriental languages of the *Codex Cumanicus*’, esp. 107–9 and 115.



Persia' as he noted.<sup>5</sup> Traders also needed Cuman, which was widely spoken in the khanate of the Golden Horde.<sup>6</sup> Both languages were used for missionary work, though Cuman was particularly important because it was the language of pagans ripe for conversion, whereas Persian was strongly associated with Islam, whose followers in the Persian-speaking world tended not to apostatize to Christianity.<sup>7</sup> Westerners who journeyed in the lands of the Mongols naturally learned more languages than Persian and Cuman. For instance, Marco Polo, who touched on the subject of languages more than thirty times in his narrative of his travels, reported that he not only learned to speak Mongol, but to read and write it.<sup>8</sup> But if he made or used wordlists as he learned the language, they are lost.

The Codex Cumanicus wordlists chanced to survive. They are preserved in a composite manuscript, written on paper. Even as a whole, it is a small, portable book: its 82 leaves are up to 20.5 cm tall and up to 14 cm wide, slightly smaller than the pages of the print version of the book you are reading. The parts from which it was made up were little more than booklets.<sup>9</sup> The first part is a Latin–Persian–Cuman dictionary of fifty-five leaves, clearly written and set out in three spaciouly laid out columns. Under the heading 'In this book are contained Persian and Cuman, according to the alphabet', it begins with the parts of the verb *audio* 'I hear'.<sup>10</sup> It then presents other verbs (and semantically related nouns), arranged in alphabetical order of Latin headword; adverbs; notes on the declension of nouns and pronouns; and subject-ordered lists of nouns, the first being for the vocabulary of Christianity and the last being for that of food. A number of the lists register words for traded goods: the codex is 'very rich in the international mercantile vocabulary that had developed in the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Eurasia'.<sup>11</sup> In all, there are about 1500 entries. The combination of grammatical paradigms and subject-ordered lexical material is Western rather than Eastern, being characteristic of the late antique and medieval tradition of Greek–Latin schoolbooks known as *hermeneumata*.<sup>12</sup> This dictionary was probably originally compiled in or near Caffa (now Feodosiya), a Genoese trading colony in the Crimea, around 1292–1295. The extant manuscript is dated 11 July 1303, but this date has been copied from a lost manuscript, itself a copy of the thirteenth-century archetype;

<sup>5</sup> Willem, *Mission* 147 (xxiii.5) = *Itinerarium* 225, 'saraceni loquentes persicum, longissime tamen erant a Perside'.

<sup>6</sup> Golden, 'Codex Cumanicus' 30–2.

<sup>7</sup> Vásáry, 'Oriental languages of the *Codex Cumanicus*' 113; for the missionary study of Persian in the world of the Codex Cumanicus, see Piemontese, 'Il *Codex Cumanicus* alla luce delle glosse sul Vangelo Persiano'.

<sup>8</sup> Borst, *Turmbau von Babel* 855.

<sup>9</sup> Marcon, 'Osservazioni' 78 gives measurements, and calls the extant manuscript 'un codice agile, facile de portare con sé'.

<sup>10</sup> Transcription from *Codex Cumanicus* (1880) 1, 'In hoc libro co[n]ti[n]entur p[er]sicum et coma[n]icum p[er] alfabetum'.

<sup>11</sup> Golden, 'Codex Cumanicus' 47; see also Balletto, 'Il mondo del commercio nel *Codex Cumanicus*'.

<sup>12</sup> Seneković, 'Il *Codex Cumanicus* e la tradizione lessicografica'; for an overview of *hermeneumata*, see Dickey, *Colloquia of the Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana* 16–44.

the handwriting and paper stock both suggest that the first part of the extant manuscript was written around 1330. The place of writing of the extant manuscript appears to have been a monastery in or near the city of Sarai, which was the capital of the Golden Horde, on a channel of the lower Volga in what is now Astrakhan.<sup>13</sup>

The second part of the manuscript was written around 1340, in a number of different hands, with a less formal script and layout than the first part.<sup>14</sup> Its compilers may have been Franciscan missionaries from Germany working in the lower Volga area. It begins with Cuman–German and Cuman–Latin wordlists, and goes on to present Christian prayers and hymns, interspersed with further short wordlists and other material such as the earliest extant Turkic riddles.<sup>15</sup> The wordlists are, at first sight, heterogeneous. But taking the words in the order in which they stand in the manuscript, it is possible to make some sense of their sequence. So, it has been argued that in part of the first Cuman–German wordlist, which includes several words for different kinds of lambskin but also for different actions and for *eyn scharf messir* ‘a sharp knife’,

we can catch a glimpse of a scenery [*sc.* scene] of merchandising and bargaining: ‘I make the deal’, ‘I blink’, ‘I snort’. Even the Latin ‘litigo’ and ‘facio vobis adiutorium’ [‘I dispute’ and ‘I give you support’: these are intrusions into a largely Cuman–German list] make sense in this context. ‘I’m picking my teeth’, ‘I’m stirring the fire’ and the ‘sharp knife’ fit in a setting of trading by disputing and sitting together around a fire.<sup>16</sup>

In another list, translations of German *en gihyft grap* ‘tomb’, *des toden hws* ‘house of the dead’, and *des dodin bilde* ‘image of the dead’ may ‘testify to the astonished look of a stranger on the burial habits of the Comans [*sic*] with their gravehills and figural grave-stones.’<sup>17</sup> What we see here is not a systematic gathering of the vocabulary immediately necessary for evangelization or indeed for trade, but rather a set of fieldwork notes, made by someone who was interested in the Cuman language and its speakers. These are rare direct representatives of a medieval tradition of Latin Christian missionary linguistics, but in this case, ‘missionary linguistics’ must not be taken in too narrow a sense.<sup>18</sup>

To conclude this glance at the Codex Cumanicus itself, its first part gave traders and, later, missionaries access to two important *lingue franche*, and its second part documents language learning for missionary purposes. In the second part in particular, a glimmer of linguistic curiosity shines out, but the intended practical usefulness of the whole book must be kept in mind.

<sup>13</sup> Vásáry, ‘Oriental languages of the *Codex Cumanicus*’ 110–11; Marcon, ‘Osservazioni’ 74, 78–81.

<sup>14</sup> Marcon, ‘Osservazioni’ 83–5; Schnyder, ‘Mirrors of oral communication’ 153.

<sup>15</sup> For the riddles, see Golden, ‘Codex Cumanicus’ 44–5.

<sup>16</sup> Schnyder, ‘Mirrors of oral communication’ 158.

<sup>17</sup> Schnyder, ‘Mirrors of oral communication’ 160.

<sup>18</sup> They are contextualized in the story of missionary linguistics in Wonderly and Nida’s pioneering ‘Linguistics and Christian missions’ 111, for more on the study of languages by medieval missionaries, see Bischoff, ‘Study of foreign languages’ 222–4.



### 3

## Curiosity and lexicography from Petrarch to Leibniz

An interesting misattribution suggests how the fourteenth-century practicality which shaped the *Codex Cumanicus* contrasts with seventeenth-century attitudes to wordlists of unusual languages. The codex was at some point brought to Venice, where it was stored with other books and papers in an upper room of Saint Mark's Basilica. When this archival deposit was discovered by the Venetian historian Fortunato Olmo in 1634, he took it to be part of the library of manuscripts which had been bequeathed to the Republic of Venice by the poet Petrarch. So, the first printed notices of the *Codex Cumanicus* identified it as having been owned by Petrarch.<sup>1</sup> This identification was mistaken: the deposit of which the codex was part included material which could not, on chronological grounds, have belonged to Petrarch, and there appears to be no reason to suppose that any Petrarchan material was ever added to it.<sup>2</sup> However, the story of the Petrarchan provenance of the *Codex Cumanicus* came to be widely disseminated.<sup>3</sup>

It was, notably, taken up by Leibniz, from whose wonderful curiosity so little escaped. At the beginning of 1697, he wrote about the *Codex Cumanicus* and its supposed provenance to the Swedish diplomat and book-collector Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeld, who was himself a lexicographer, being the compiler of a very slim *Vocabularium Germanico-Turcico-Arabico-Persicum* and of a four-volume *Lexicon Slavonicum* (the *lingua Slavonica* in this case was a mixture of Ruthenian and Church Slavonic) of 25,636 entries.<sup>4</sup> In Italy, Leibniz reported, he had seen a catalogue of the manuscripts of Petrarch in which there was an entry for a work whose title suggested 'that it was a little dictionary of words in Cuman, Persian, and Latin', and which reproduced the first words of the manuscript; Leibniz had transcribed these words, and would have liked to send them to Sparwenfeld for the latter's thoughts on their linguistic affinities, which might suggest the ethnic origins of the Cumans, but had mislaid

<sup>1</sup> Marcon, 'Osservazioni' 85–92, 94.

<sup>2</sup> See esp. Marcon, 'Osservazioni' 89, 'L'assegnazione in toto al lascito del Petrarca risultava non più possibile, anche per mere ragioni di cronologia riguardo all'età dei manoscritti.'

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. *Codex Cumanicus* (1880) vii.

<sup>4</sup> For the *Lexicon Slavonicum*, see Birgegård, *Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeld* (entry count at 5).

them in the chaos of his papers.<sup>5</sup> In the same year, he wrote to the poet Bartolomeo Ortensio Mauro in the hope that he might help in the search for the manuscript itself, because 'this piece taken from the library of Petrarch' would help 'to restore a language which is at present lost, namely that of the Cumans, a Scythian people'.<sup>6</sup> His fruitless inquiries after the Codex Cumanicus continued for months.<sup>7</sup> The questions which Leibniz hoped the Codex Cumanicus would help to answer were in fact typically Leibnizian questions, not Petrarchan ones, and the contrast is exemplary. Petrarch's deep familiarity with Latin as well as his native Italian did not lead him on to any further interest in spoken languages.<sup>8</sup> He lived in the century when the Codex Cumanicus was compiled, and was a countryman of the compilers of its first part, but the book would have been of little interest to him if he had ever encountered it. Olmo and Leibniz were judging him by the standards of the seventeenth century when they imagined him as the sort of polyhistor who would value a set of Cuman, or even Persian, wordlists.

It so happens that Leibniz's interest in the Cuman language leads to another exemplary contrast between the linguistic interests of his own day and those of Italian humanism. In the letter to Sparwenfeld of January 1697 in which he referred to the Codex Cumanicus, he went on to reflect that some Cumans had retreated before the Mongols into Hungary, and reported that he had been unable to find out whether this movement had left any traces. Writing to the bibliographer Johann Albert Fabricius in September of the same year, he recast this question in linguistic terms: 'I have always had a suspicion that in some enclaves of Dacia'—he meant an area north of the Danube and east of Austria, roughly corresponding to parts of modern Romania and Moldova—'some remains of the Cuman language may survive'.<sup>9</sup> Just under two hundred years earlier, Aldus Manutius had written to Jan Lubrański, bishop of Poznań, reminding him of a promise 'to send and search for books in the land of the Dacians, where men say there is a tower full of ancient books'.<sup>10</sup> For Manutius, research in Dacia

<sup>5</sup> Leibniz, letter of 29 January 1697 to Sparwenfeld, in his *Sämtliche Schriften* 1.13: 542, 'c'estoit un petit dictionnaire des mots en langue Cumane, Persane et Latine. Et on met même le commencement contenant un couple de mots, je pensois trouver maintenant mon extrait de ce catalogue, pour en avoir vostre sentiment et pour apprendre par vostre moyen à quelle des langues connües ces mots se rapportent le plus, pour juger de la langue et nation des Cumans mais je ne le sçauois trouver encor dans le cahos de mes papiers'. Cf. Sparwenfeld's reply of 3 March 1697, ed. cit. 1.13: 640, and see the discussion of the catalogue which Leibniz had seen, in *Codex Cumanicus* (1880) ix.

<sup>6</sup> Leibniz, letter of 5 May 1697 to Mauro, in his *Sämtliche Schriften* 1.14: 187, 'cette piece tirée de la Bibliotheque de Petrarque... sert à retablir une langue maintenant perdue, qui est celle des Cumans peuples Scythiques'.

<sup>7</sup> Leibniz, letter to Sparwenfeld of 13 July 1697 in his *Sämtliche Schriften* 1.14: 339–42 at 340; letter to Mauro of 4 August 1697, *ibid.* 394–5; letter to Sparwenfeld of 29 November 1697, *ibid.* 755–63 at 761.

<sup>8</sup> Borst, *Turmbau von Babel* 961.

<sup>9</sup> Leibniz, letter of 14 September 1697 to Fabricius, in his *Sämtliche Schriften* 1.14: 496–7, 'Semper mihi suspicio fuit, posse in aliquibus Daciae angulis aliquas superesse reliquias linguae Cumanae'.

<sup>10</sup> Manutius, dedication of Valerius Maximus (1502) to Lubrański in *Aldo Manuzio editore* 1: 67, 'pollicitus es... ad Dacas usque mittere inveniendi librorum gratia, quod ibi antiquorum librorum plena turris esse dicatur', trans. Lowry, *World of Aldus Manutius* 197, and discussed Considine, *Dictionaries in Early Modern Europe* 20.

might recover ancient texts in Greek or Latin; for Leibniz, on the other hand, it might recover fragments of the ancient language of a nomadic people of Asia.

Dictionaries and wordlists of strange languages were seldom or never read out of curiosity in the Latin Christendom of Petrarch as they were in the Europe of Leibniz. When the medieval study of language went beyond the practical business of learning languages which were useful for trade or had cultural prestige, it was oriented towards grammar or, less often, towards encyclopaedic Latin etymology in the tradition of St Isidore of Seville, rather than towards the collection of vocabulary. Similarly, as the historian Brian Ogilvie has put it, medieval natural philosophy 'discouraged studying the particular, which was no part of philosophy, and urged instead the ascent to universals, the discovery of natures or essences'.<sup>11</sup> Individual words are, like individual kinds of plant, particular entities, and the comparison between the study of words and the study of plants is one to which we shall return. For now, we may note that the study of plants in the world of Petrarch attended to those which could be used or had to be avoided, whether in medicine or as food for humans or animals: it was as fundamentally practical as the listing of words in the same world. Nor is it unfair to couple the name of Petrarch with an account of the 'limited, practically oriented knowledge of nature' of his day.<sup>12</sup> Ogilvie contrasts Petrarch's famous ascent of Mont Ventoux, which he recounted as a spiritual experience rather than as an investigation of the natural world, with the account by the sixteenth-century Swiss naturalist and bibliographer Conrad Gessner of a pleasurable, and definitely investigative, botanizing ascent of Mount Pilatus, and contrasts Petrarch's natural theology with the detail-oriented argument from design of the seventeenth-century English naturalist and theologian John Ray.<sup>13</sup>

The availability of Latin as the lingua franca of scholarship and (except on the borders between Latin Christendom and the Arabic-speaking and Greek-speaking worlds) of international communication meant that language learning in medieval Latin Christendom was not even as necessary a practical exercise as it became in modern Europe.<sup>14</sup> To be sure, many of Petrarch's contemporaries in Latin Christendom did learn the living languages of their neighbours with the help of written texts, using pedagogical tools such as the wordlists produced for speakers of English who wanted to learn French or those produced for German merchants with business in Italy.<sup>15</sup> Many others were bilingual because they lived in bilingual areas or had at some time moved from one language area to another. However, there was nothing surprising about the simultaneous depth and narrowness of Petrarch's linguistic accomplishments, or about the linguistic incuriosity which they suggest.

<sup>11</sup> Ogilvie, *Science of Describing* 99.

<sup>12</sup> Ogilvie, *Science of Describing* 105.

<sup>13</sup> Ogilvie, *Science of Describing* 103–5 and 112–13; for more on Gessner and mountains, see *ibid.* 70 (and for seventeenth-century ascents of Mount Pilatus, Cooper, *Inventing the Indigenous* 133), and for more on Ray's entomology, see Ogilvie, 'Attending to insects'.

<sup>14</sup> For a few case studies of western Europeans who used Greek and Arabic in international communication in the thirteenth century, see Roncaglia, 'I frati minori e lo studio delle lingue orientali' 178–84.

<sup>15</sup> For the general point, see Bischoff, 'Study of foreign languages', esp. 211–12; for an English example, see Baker, 'French vocabulary', and for a German one, see Pausch, *Älteste italienisch-deutsche Sprachbuch*.

It was on account of this incuriosity that medieval Western lexicography very seldom engaged with languages other than those of the West (there is a Latin–Arabic glossary from twelfth-century Spain, but in the twelfth century, Arabic, in so far as it was the language of al-Andalus, was a Western language).<sup>16</sup> Likewise, when strange languages were encountered close to home, their words were only noted for practical purposes: for instance, a twelfth-century record of a pilgrimage has a few useful basic words of Basque, to which we shall return, and a fifteenth-century Hungarian document gathers forty words of the Iranian language Yassic, possibly for use by someone obliged to make a brief sojourn in a Yassic-speaking area.<sup>17</sup> (Again, there is a contrast with post-medieval thought: writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries commented with interest on the former presence in Hungary of this mysterious non-Hungarian language, though they did not know the fifteenth-century document, and hence had no specimens to investigate).<sup>18</sup> The pre-eminence of Latin as a strongly codified written language with a few vernacular traditions of literacy in second place to it might even lead to a sense that some unwritten languages were, by contrast, somehow too chaotic to be written at all: this is what the Swiss historian Aegidius Tschudi said about Romansch as late as the 1530s, though the traveller Arnold von Harff had remarked forty years earlier that the absence of a tradition of literacy among the speakers of Albanian simply made it harder to write that language down, and Bonaventura Vulcanius would point out sixty years later that if a language can be spoken then of course it can be written.<sup>19</sup>

Here, Latin Christendom contrasts sharply with the linguistically diverse societies of the Mongol realms and their neighbours, which generated very interesting polyglot dictionaries. Indeed, the Codex Cumanicus has less in common with the Western lexicography of its time than with dictionaries such as the so-called Rasulid Hexaglot, a collection of Arabic, Turkic (some of which is arguably Cuman), Persian, colloquial Greek, western Armenian, and Mongol vocabularies from fourteenth-century Yemen.<sup>20</sup> Willem van Ruysbroeck's linguistic thought was strikingly sophisticated for

<sup>16</sup> For the Latin–Arabic glossary, see Bischoff, 'Study of foreign languages' 212 and Fletcher, *Conversion of Europe* 325; the latter points out that the Christian evangelization of Muslims did extend beyond the boundaries of Europe, to the southern and eastern margins of the Mediterranean, so that the glossary need not be assumed to have been made for use exclusively within Spain.

<sup>17</sup> Németh, *Wörterliste der Jassen* 14 (text) and plate I (facsimile); *ibid.* 12 comments on the reasons for writing the wordlist and on its date.

<sup>18</sup> The first appears to have been Georg Werner, in a treatise on springs, *De admirandis Hungariae aquis hypomnematation*, published in 1551 and quoted Németh, *Wörterliste der Jassen* 9, 'retinent iidem etiam nunquam suam auitam et peculiarem', the source of Duret, *Thrésor* 729, 'habent peculiarem et auitam linguam'; see also Brerewood, *Enquiries* 21–2 (not from his usual source, which was Scaliger, 'Europaeorum linguae').

<sup>19</sup> Tschudi, *De prisca ac vera Alpina Rhaetia* 9 'Rhaetica lingua tam perplexa et impedita est, ut scribi nequeat'; Harff, *Pilgerfahrt* 65 'eyn eygen sprache...der man nyet wael geschrijuen en kan, as sij geyn eygen litter in deme lande en hauen'; Vulcanius, *De literis et lingua Getarum* 91 'quasi vero lingua quae pronu[n]ciari potest scribi nequeat'.

<sup>20</sup> Golden, 'Rasulid Hexaglot'; for the question of whether some of the Turkic content is Cuman, see Golden, 'Codex Cumanicus' 51.

his day: he perceived, for instance, that Cuman, Turkish, and Uighur appeared to be related, and suggested that Uighur preserved the 'source and root' of the Turkish and Cuman languages.<sup>21</sup> But he was asking these questions in the East, exposed not only to Eastern languages but to a cultural world in which languages were explored more adventurously than in the West of his day. Observations of Willem's were taken up again by learned Europeans at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup>

It is only fair to medieval Western thinkers to add that there was a possible material constraint on their opportunities for linguistic inquiry. The relatively high price of paper and parchment may have made it an extravagance for them to copy low-priority material like lists of unusual words. By contrast, in China, where writing media were cheaper, more foreign-language wordlists were written down, even though Chinese literati do not seem to have felt much intellectual interest in the languages of their neighbours.<sup>23</sup> In the West, paper became cheaper from the thirteenth century onwards, and as this happened, a constraint on the making of wordlists would have been removed. Curiosity-driven lexical study, as practised by Leibniz but not by Petrarch, can therefore be seen as an activity like the keeping of private journals, promoted by the availability of cheap paper. But this is not the whole story, for it raises the question of why lists of unusual words were low-priority material in the first place.

<sup>21</sup> Willem, *Mission* 159 (xxvi.4) = *Itinerarium* 234, 'Apud lugures est fons et radix ideomatis turci et commanici', discussed, with other references to Willem's interest in languages, Borst, *Turmbau von Babel* 771.

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, Leibniz, letter of 9 August 1694 to Nicolaas Witsen, in his *Sämtliche Schriften* 1.10: 511–12 at 511.

<sup>23</sup> Harbsmeier, *Language and Logic* 82–4.





# 4

## The history of lexicography and the history of curiosity

The main kind of wordlist which did circulate to satisfy the lexical curiosity of medieval Westerners was the list of the names for numbers, letters of the alphabet, or months in an exotic language such as Greek, Hebrew, Coptic, or Armenian (though knowledge of the names of months in different languages was also of practical use in the *computus*, the calendrical studies whose object was to ensure that the date of Easter was correctly calculated).<sup>1</sup> Such lists might be found side by side with functional wordlists. Two English examples are the so-called *Itineraries* of William Wey, which dates from the third quarter of the fifteenth century and includes Greek wordlists and a shorter Hebrew list, and the printed *Informacōn for Pylgrymes vnto the Holy Londe* of about 1500, which offers some words and phrases in colloquial Arabic and modern Greek, and the numbers from one to thirty in Turkish.<sup>2</sup> Pilgrimage handbooks did undoubtedly see real use, especially before the journey to Jerusalem was made more difficult by the Ottoman conquest in 1517. So it is that Wey's Greek wordlists and the *Informacōn*'s Arabic and Greek vocabulary are practically chosen: names of foodstuffs, courtesy formulae, and the like. But Wey's Hebrew list is a jumble of Biblical words, and the *Informacōn*'s Turkish numbers would hardly have been useful without a bit more Turkish vocabulary, so both of these seem to have been included for interest's sake. Three other fifteenth-century texts from Latin Christendom include short passages in Tatar and Turkish.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For names of numbers and months see Bischoff, 'Study of foreign languages' 213, and cf. the lists of month-names in, e.g., St Bede, *De ratione temporum* chapters 11, 14, and 15 (for which see C. W. Jones, 'Polemios Silvius, Bede, and the names of the months'); for names of letters of the alphabet, see e.g. *Mandeville's Travels* (1953) 1: 14–15 and 2: 412 (Greek), 1: 39 and 2: 412 (the names are unidentifiable, but the alphabet is Coptic), 1: 77 (Hebrew), etc. Cf. also the Greek–Latin rare-word dictionaries, descended from late antique wordlists made for practical purposes, but circulated by the Carolingian age as 'receuils de curiosités lexicales' (Boulhol, *Grec langaige* 55); Ciggaar, 'Bilingual word lists and phrase lists' 170–1 suggests that some of these may have been used for teaching.

<sup>2</sup> Wey, *Itineraries* 102–4 (English–Greek), 104–15 (Greek–Latin), 115–16 (Hebrew–Latin and Latin–Hebrew mixed), and 140–2 (Latin–Greek); *Informacōn for Pylgrymes*, sigs. e2v–e3v. For two earlier examples, see Ciggaar, 'Bilingual word lists and phrase lists' 172–5, and for a couple of sixteenth-century guides including Greek and Turkish, see Lauxtermann, 'Of frogs and hangmen' 171.

<sup>3</sup> Yerasimos, 'Les voyageurs et la connaissance de la langue Turque' 49–53.