

Visible Language Policy— Bilingualism and Multilingualism on Postage Stamps

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The postage stamp is a highly visible, internationally circulated symbol of national identity. Since its beginnings in the 1840s it has also been a symbol of language policy. Stamps of countries on all continents reflect official bilingualism: the two most striking, carefully observed contemporary instances, Belgium and Canada, both show a slow, painful historical movement from original monolingualism to today's scrupulous bilingualism. In Third World nations, language identity has sometimes changed, sometimes remained unchanged since independence. Minority languages have increasingly been represented on postage stamps. Languages of wider communication, chiefly English and French, are used by some countries, avoided by others. Others seek a politically neutral language in Latin or Esperanto. Postage stamps are testimony to language change, language policy, and language reform. In them, language policy is visible.

THE POSTAGE STAMP is a highly visible symbol of national identity and sovereignty. Since the introduction of the adhesive postage stamp by Great Britain in 1840, the number of states issuing them has grown constantly. The only attempted abolition of the postage stamp was under the Pol Pot régime of Kampuchea in 1978, when they were eliminated along with money, and probably along with a formal postal service. But even there, shortly before its overthrow, the Pol Pot government modified its decision and announced that it would, after all, issue stamps (with figures of value expressed in a non-existent currency), but not for postage—only for sale to foreign collectors. This forthright statement, which simply recognized an established fact for many Third-World and other nations, that many of their most attractive stamps were printed in metropolitan countries for sale to collectors there, and in some cases not placed on sale in their nominal countries of origin—placed philatelists in a quandary, which was soon resolved by the demise of the Pol Pot government.

Neither the world's first postage stamp issuing country, nor the second, Brazil, thought it necessary to identify its postal issues by including the country name. Great Britain omitted its name because it was the only stamp-issuing country at the time. The British identity of the Penny Black was clear enough thanks to the head of Queen Victoria. The only wording required was "One Penny." Brazil, in 1843, saw no need for any wording whatsoever, an oval design distinctive from that of the rectangular, slightly vertical British issue, and a figure of value, sufficed. Other early countries such as Belgium, likewise, did not identify themselves by name. The inscription "U S Post Office" on the first American issue and "Emp: [Empire] Français" on that of France, in 1847 and 1848 respectively, established a principle which continues to the present day; except that Great Britain, under a "grandfather clause" which it itself created, deems the head of the reigning monarch sufficient identification. All other countries and colonies must identify their stamps in words to prove, as it were, that their stamps are *not* British. Moreover, under the regulations of the Universal Postal Union (established in Berne in 1874 and thus the oldest specialized agency of the United Nations) such identification must be made in the Latin alphabet—a notable example of international linguistic discrimination on an Eurocentric basis.

The UPU became concerned about the number of countries not adhering to this regulation in the mid-1960s; as a result, two of the leading countries using non-Latin alphabets, Greece and Japan, began to place a Latin-alphabet transliteration of their name on all stamp issues, beginning in 1966. For Greece, this was the traditional "Hellas" (Figure 1), although the *h* is, in fact, phonetically absent; for Japan, too, it was the well-known "Nippon" rather than the more commonly heard *Nihon*. At that time, too, Yugoslavia dropped its earlier even-handed policy of roughly alternating the use of the Cyrillic alphabet (used by its majority Serbian population and others) and the Latin (used by the Croats and Slovenes) in favor of the country name "Jugoslavija" always in the Latin alphabet (Figure 2), even when the stamp commemorates a Cyrillic-using republic of the country (in this case, a historic peasant uprising in Macedonia). The chief country not heeding the UPU's rule is now the Soviet Union, which continues to use only the Cyrillic "СССР" for USSR.

Policy on the stamps of Third World countries varies widely. Those with well-established, traditional indigenous cultures not subject to the historical influx of the languages of colonial powers tend to maximize their national language on stamps while adhering to

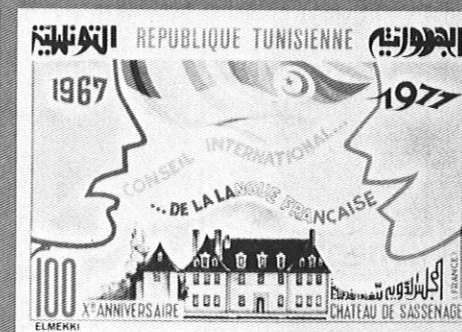
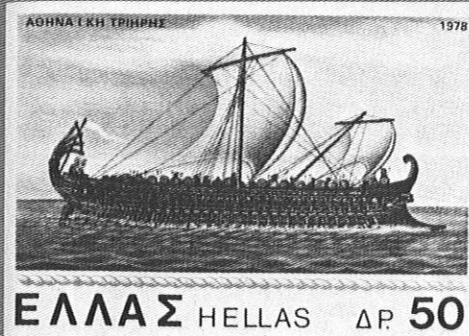
UPU regulations with a word, or a few letters, in English or French. This is notably true in Saudi Arabia, whose cryptic inscription "K.S.A." (for Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) might leave the uninitiated none the wiser (Figure 3). A similar policy applies in Libya and will probably now be implemented in Iran. Some Third World countries, on the other hand, continue to show the linguistic consequences of neo-colonialism. They tend to be ruled by a neo-colonial elite who are linguistically alienated from the mass of the population. This applies to much of traditionally anglophone and francophone Africa, but there are signs of change there. Madagascar, for example, whose stamps read "République Malgache" in French until 1961, is now "Republika Malagasy" in Malagasy. Commemorative and functional inscriptions on its stamps continued in French until the mid-1970s, but are now also in Malagasy.

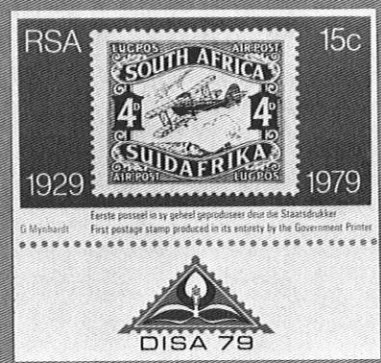
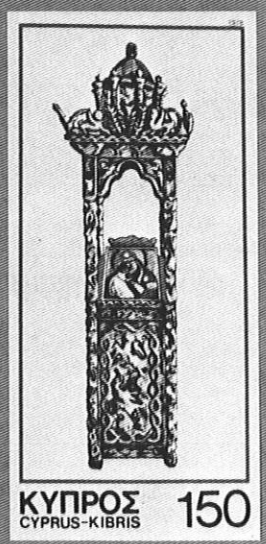
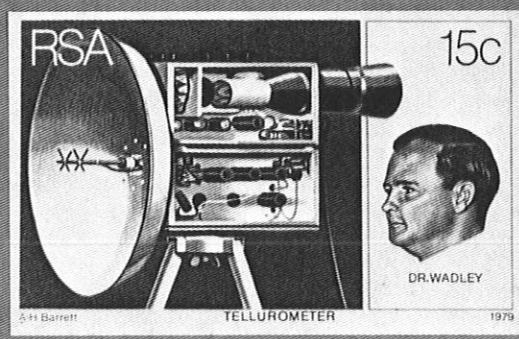
An interestingly dual language policy appears on a stamp of Senegal issued in 1977 for the tenth anniversary of the International Council of the French Language (Figure 4). The distinguished poet of negritude, President Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal (along with President Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia) is one of the two chief initiators of the Council and a pillar of Francophonie in Africa. But other languages of Senegal are recognized for the first time on that stamp (Figure 4)—French is placed alongside Wolof, Seereer, Pulaar, Joola, Mandinka, and Soninke.

An African counterpart to Canada is the United Republic of Cameroon. Its stamp (Figure 5) issued for the same event in 1977 shows the official bilingualism in French and English of this country, 99 percent of whose population speak neither European language natively. Cameroon is composed of a majority of ex-French territory and a minority of ex-British. The de facto dominance of French is indicated, firstly, in the superior placement of the country name in that language; secondly, in the functional inscription "Poste aérienne" solely in French; thirdly, in the denomination, expressed in (Cameroonian) francs; fourthly, in the fact that the stamp was designed and printed in France as part of a uniform series also issued by the Ivory Coast, Chad, etc.; and finally, by the very topic selected—the International Council of the French Language, headquartered in the lovely Château de Sassenage, France. The same motif and a similar bilingualism are found on a stamp of Tunisia (Figure 6). One of the dozens of whimsical stamp designs produced by the internationally known Tunisian stamp designer and engraver, Hatem Elmekki, it is immediately recognizable as an Elmekki product, and it attests to the continuing strength of the French language in Tunisia and in North Africa generally. Algeria, whose historical

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experience with France is more bitter than that of Tunisia, does not emphasize its ideological adherence to Francophonie,¹ and did not issue a stamp for the Council's anniversary.

Elsewhere in the Mediterranean world, the language policy of Israel is exemplified by a recent stamp issue (Figure 7). The country name, Israel, appears in the two official languages, Hebrew and Arabic, but the commemorative inscription is in Hebrew only. The first instance of the use of a word other than the bare minimum, Israel, in the Arabic language on an Israeli stamp was in 1970, when the Great Synagogue of Tunis was depicted and labeled; the second was in 1972, when the demand "Let my people go" was carried on an Israeli stamp in Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, and English; and most recently, the Arabic term for "pacification, peace-making" appeared on a 1979 issue commemorating the Egyptian-Israeli treaties, alongside "shalom" and "peace."

Space on Israeli stamps is limited, *inter alia*, by the need to indicate the country name in three languages. From Israel's first stamp issue in 1948, then, additional information has been carried on a tab, attached generally below, at times beside, the stamps at the sheet bottom (or edge). These tabs are found inscribed in Hebrew only, in Hebrew and French, or in Hebrew and English (Figure 7). Since 1965, English rather than French has been consistently used.

Also in the Mediterranean, the divided island of Cyprus offers us, not unexpectedly, a divided linguistic policy. Until the independence of Cyprus in 1960, all stamps were inscribed in English, the language of the colonial power, only. Independence saw a different policy, the elimination of the ex-colonial language on the first issue of the Republic; their inscription Republic of Cyprus was in Greek (above, or on the left) and Turkish only. But this policy was reversed, and the role of English as a neutral, intercommunal language was recognized in 1962, when Greek "Kipros" and Turkish "Kibris" appeared in large letters; "Cyprus" reappearing in somewhat smaller type.

As intercommunal relations in the new state worsened and the Turkish Cypriots were alienated from the central government, a new policy was adopted in 1965. The Greek "Kipros" was placed first, in large letters, the English (no longer Turkish) "Cyprus" second, and finally the Turkish "Kibris." This remains the policy of the Nicosia administration today (Figure 8). Meanwhile, in 1973 Turkish forces invaded and occupied the northeastern part of the island and a Turkish Cypriot Federated State was established. Its stamps are inscribed in Turkish only (and printed in Turkey, just as those of the Nicosia government are printed in Greece and appear similar to

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Greek stamps), making no attempt to cater to the Greek- or English-using population (Figure 9).

Several thousand miles to the south, language policy is also applied in a multi-national, multi-ethnic country, South Africa. When the Union of South Africa was established, on May 31, 1910, its official languages were English and Dutch, and the first stamp was inscribed "Unie van Zuid-Afrika," with the distinctive Z which is found in Dutch, but not Afrikaans, and which gave South Africa its continuing international identification mark for motor vehicles, ZA. Dutch had, in fact, long since ceased to be spoken at the Cape, and by 1926, "Zuid-Afrika" yielded to the Afrikaans "Suid-Afrika." Upon the proclamation of a republic, on May 31, 1961, the rather lengthy bilingual inscription "Republic of South Africa/Republiek van Suid-Afrika" in alternating orders was placed on all postage stamps. From 1967, however, this complexity was eliminated and the abbreviation "RSA" common to both languages was adopted.

Through the use of abbreviations and symbols, bilingual inscriptions can be eliminated on many South African stamps. A good example is Figure 10, where the Latinism "tellurometer" is shared by English and Afrikaans; the abbreviation "c" stands for cents to the Anglophone, cent to the Afrikaner, and the title "Dr." stands for doctor and dokter respectively. The stamp in Figure 11, falling in the collectors' thematic (topical) category of stamps-on-stamps, depicts South African bilingualism old and new.²

Neighboring South-West Africa, now known internationally as Namibia, for many years adopted the same bilingual policy as South Africa. Its first stamps, overprints on those of the Union in 1923, were inscribed in English and Dutch, and Dutch yielded to Afrikaans in 1926 as it did in South Africa. But in 1965, in a surprise move, German, the language of the former colonial power, was also recognized, and some trilingual commemorative inscriptions began, although the country name remained in English and Afrikaans only. The abbreviation "SWA"—which handily fits South-West Africa, Suidwes-Afrika, and the German Südwestafrika—was adopted in 1968 and is shown in Figure 12. There as elsewhere a trilingual inscription is avoided by cryptic wording. The stamp depicts the J. G. Strijdom Airport (in Afrikaans, Lughawe, in German, Flughafen), Windhoek; but none of the three words is used; rather, "J. G. Strijdom" alone appears, and the fact that it is an airport must be gathered from the picture. When universal suffrage was introduced in South-West Africa in 1978, the definitive (regular) stamp issues, with their linguistically neutral inscriptions, were given overprints,

one stamp out of three being overprinted in English, German, or Afrikaans, respectively. The results, and the even-handed policy followed in alternating the languages, are shown in Figure 13.

Moving from Africa to Asia, we note the bilingualism of a British colony, Hong Kong. Most issues of British colonies are inscribed in English only—certainly, not a word of Spanish has appeared on a stamp of Gibraltar—but Hong Kong has always had bilingual stamps since its first issue of 1862. This is in contrast with the issues of British India, which were in English only until independence. Note that the Queen is represented, not by her head but by the royal monogram, the crown, and "E II R" (Elizabetha Secunda Regina) (Figure 14).

The Republic of Korea identifies itself in Korean and English (Figure 15) and, like Israel, provides additional information bilingually on the sheet edge.

A different kind of bilingualism is found in a politically unique entity, the Condominium of the New Hebrides in the South Pacific. Here British and French Residents exercise equal power, and foreigners arriving in the islands must declare whether, in the event of an infraction of the laws, they wish to be judged under British or French law. There are not really two postal services in the New Hebrides, a British and a French, but the dual condominium status of the islands is reflected in the issuance since 1908 of parallel sets of postage stamps inscribed in French and in English. In the French-language issues, out of courtesy, the British royal monogram is placed in the top left corner of most, though not all, stamps; while the British stamp printers generally, though not always, give similar precedence to the "RF" and fasces of the French Republic. In Figure 16 it will be noted that the original title of the painting by Albrecht Dürer remains in German. Among the many fascinating features of the stamps of the New Hebrides are the facts that, while the rest of the world had left the Gold Standard in the 1930s, the stamps of the Condominium continued to be inscribed in gold centimes or gold francs until July 1, 1977; and also that some English-language issues, prepared and printed at the Atelier des Timbres-poste in Paris, are inscribed in a French-influenced English. Thus, on a stamp issued in 1974 to commemorate the opening of the new post office at Vila, the capital, we read "Ancient Post Office" for what should obviously be Old Post Office or Former Post Office but was influenced by the French *Ancien bureau de poste*.

The largest land mass of dependent territory so recognized by the United Nations Committee on Dependent Territories is neither a



British nor a French possession but the island of Greenland, presently administered as a county of Denmark. Its stamps illustrate not only bilingualism but also linguistic reform.

The first issues of Greenland in 1905 were inscribed in Danish only, "Grønland." But in 1964 the name "Kalâtdlit Nunât" in the Greenlandic language, a standardized variety of Eastern Eskimo (known in Canada as Inuktitut) was used on an issue commemorating the Greenlandic philologist and codifier of the language, Samuel Kleinschmidt. The name did not reappear until 1969, but it then took pride of place above "Grønland" (Figure 17). However, in 1978 a linguistic reform was implemented—the spatial variety upon which standard Greenlandic was based was changed, and the circumflex on â, not available on the Danish (or English) typewriters most commonly distributed in Greenland, was replaced by aa. The country's name now reads "Kalaallit Nunaat" (Figure 18).³

Language reform is illustrated on a strikingly simple poster-type design from Turkey of 1978 (Figure 19). It was issued for the fiftieth anniversary of Kemal Atatürk's linguistic reform of 1928 in which the Arabic alphabet for Turkish (and all other non-Latin alphabets for languages spoken in Turkey) was abolished and replaced by Latin. The receding Arabic "alef, beth, gimel, dalet" yield to the emergent "ABC." As on other modern Turkish stamps, the name of the country is expressed as "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti" (Republic of Turkey) the latter word being a historic borrowing from Arabic *gumhuriya* but written, of course, like all other Turkish words in Latin script. This commemorative stamp is, in fact, the second to carry Arabic script since the 1928 reform, the other being a commemorative inscription for a state visit by the King of Saudi Arabia.

Continuing on the subject of language reform, Norway offers a case study of a reform which has been only partially implemented. The country continues to use two closely kindred, mutually intelligible, but politically and culturally differentiated standard languages. The majority language—used for all standard purposes by over eighty percent of the population, including those in Oslo and the other major cities—is officially Bokmål (literally "book language"). This is an arbitrary, rather misleading term since it is also the spoken daily language of the upper and middle classes in the capital and several other cities, of most telecommunications media, etc. Some of its users prefer the formerly official term Riksmål ("state language") which correctly, if invidiously, points out that it is the customary language of the royal family and other leading circles. As in other media, Bokmål is dominant on the stamps of Norway; every stamp

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inscribed "Norge"—the overwhelming majority—is inscribed in Bokmål, and all stamps were so inscribed until 1951 (cf. Figure 20).

In 1951 eyebrows were raised among philatelists worldwide when a series of Norwegian stamps appeared inscribed not Norge but "Noreg." Letters had been reversed in error on stamps of other countries (e.g., the famous "potsage" for postage error on a peculiarly primitive-looking stamp issue of Tibet) and had become valuable rarities. The Norwegian post office, however, explained that in this case the stamp commemorated Arne Garborg, a poet and folklorist of the nineteenth century, who was among the initiators of the Nynorsk alternative standard language of that country. He and his followers preferred the variant "Noreg," and several commemorative issues since then, memorializing Nynorsk poets and writers, have borne that legend. A further step toward the public visibility of Nynorsk was taken in 1977 with the issuance of the first stamp on a general topic (rather than for an individual user of Nynorsk), a fishing-industry series with the "Noreg" wording (Figure 21).⁴

Sharing a common border with Norway is another legally bilingual nation, Finland, where, as in Norway, there is an imbalance between the two languages. Swedish, once the sole official language, is now spoken natively by a declining proportion of around six percent of the population, while Finnish, a Finno-Ugric language, is gaining throughout the territory of Finland, even in areas which were hitherto monolingually Swedish or nearly so.⁵ The two languages are simply presented in Figure 22: "Suomi" (Land of a Thousand Lakes) is the Finnish name, while "Finland," which happens to be identical to the English name, is in fact Swedish.

Although a Bible translation into Finnish was made by the Renaissance figure, Mikael Agricola (Father of the Finnish Language), the language remained in eclipse and overshadowed by Swedish—the language of the nobility, landed gentry, and many of the emerging middle classes—until the political separation from Sweden in 1807. The Finnish national movement, raising Finnish to the level of a standard, all-purpose language, dominated the nineteenth century; one of its earlier figures was the preacher Paavo Ruotsalainen whose name, perhaps paradoxically, means "Paul the Swede" (*Ruotsi* in Finnish is Sweden; *Ruotsalainen* is an adjectival derivative). The Gothic script (German Fraktur) characteristic of the period and genre is used effectively on the stamp in Figure 23.

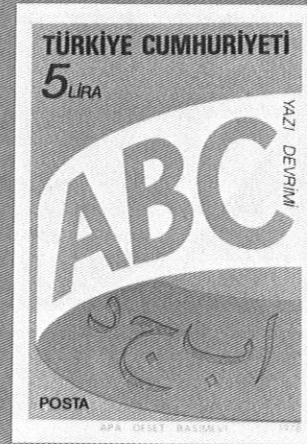
Finland has yet to establish a unitary policy on the use of a language of wider communication on those of its stamps designed to

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be recognized and understood by a worldwide audience. Latin has been used on some, French on others, and in Figure 24 we note the use of English. We will be struck by the total divergence of the Finnish text from Indo-European vocabulary, but two out of the three Swedish words seem familiar, and the first one, "barnets" (of the child, the child's) is clear to those who know the Scots word *bairn*.

Switzerland, too, on occasion uses English as a common language for the sake of neutrality between its three official (and four recognized national) languages. Figure 25 depicts one such use in connection with the inauguration of the transnational airport serving the metropolitan area straddling the Franco-Swiss political border. The use of the English inscription "Airport Basel-Mulhouse" was doubtless prompted by the recognized status of English as the language of aeronautical communication. It also served to eliminate the linguistic and political complexity of a bilingual inscription, in French presumably *Aéroport Bâle-Mulhouse* and in German *Flughafen Basel-Mühlhausen*. In fact, both sides of the Rhine at this point speak the same Alemannic language variety. It will be noted that this and all other Swiss stamps bear the country name "Helvetia" in Latin, taken from a Celtic tribe who inhabited the territory of present-day Switzerland in the days of Tacitus.

A third non-official language is found on a stamp of 1979; it is Esperanto, more neutral than English, and more modern than Latin (Figure 26). Figure 27 will remind us that most Swiss stamps, especially the definitive issues and those not commemorating a sectional or local event in one or other of the language areas, are inscribed *only* in Latin, to the satisfaction of all parties. Latin, too, gave Switzerland its familiar international car registration mark, CH for *Confoederatio Helvetica*, a more complete, official name which was featured on stamps of Switzerland only during the years of World War II when its national identity was both strengthened and threatened by the surrounding Axis or Axis-occupied states. The stamp in Figure 28 once again is another linguistic amalgam: the Latin "Helvetia," the English-derived, now internationally standardized road warning "Stop!" and the word in the three official languages: "blind" (German, coincidentally identical with the English despite 2000 years of separate development on both sides of the North Sea), "aveugle" (French) and "cieco" (Italian). The distinctly German name of designer "Jürg Mauerhofer" is featured in the lower margin to the left in accordance with standard practice on most European and some non-European stamp designs, and the

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classically French name of the printer, "Courvoisier, S.A." (Société Anonyme, i.e., Inc.), to the right. The use of "Stop" reminds us that while in most other countries, including France and French-speaking Switzerland, Stop signs have been, or are being, introduced, they are at present being eliminated in the Province of Québec, where the formerly bilingual signs Arrêt—Stop are now being reworded as Arrêt only, after decades of public controversy and etymological debate.

Mention of Québec brings us to Canada, where language policy at the federal level has traveled painfully from unilingualism in English, throughout the nineteenth century, to a current bilingualism which, in some cases, appears to favor French. The first stamps of the Province of Canada in 1851 were unilingually English and remained so throughout the reign of Queen Victoria; indeed, several stamp issues did not even aid the French Canadian with a neutral figure of value. No, they were inscribed only in English words: "half cent," "five dollars," etc.; this was the case for the Victoria Jubilee issue, 1837-1897. In 1908, however, French appeared for the first time, not in balanced bilingualism but with French-only commemorative inscriptions for the "III^e Centenaire de Québec" while the functional inscriptions, e.g., "Canada Postage half cent," remained in English only. After this short-lived commemorative, French again disappeared as a visible language to return on the 60th anniversary of Confederation issue of 1927 with side-panels reading "Postes—post," amended in 1930 to "Postes—postage" and carried, generally in that order, on almost all Canadian stamps since then.

National events continued to be commemorated chiefly in English. In 1932 we find "Ottawa Conference"; in 1933, "World's Grain Exhibition & Conference, Regina." The last stamp with a significant inscription in English only is Figure 29, commemorating the visit to Canada of "Their Royal Highnesses the Princess Elizabeth, Duchess of Edinburgh, and the Duke of Edinburgh." Thereafter, inscriptions are strictly bilingual and there is an attempt to render everything in a fully bilingual manner even when the words are closely similar or identical in both languages (Figure 30). The stamp in Figure 31 is one of the few to place the English "postage" above French "postes."

It should be mentioned in passing that the great majority of countries have eliminated the word postage from their stamp designs, considering it self-evident. It is retained in Canada, no doubt, as a symbol of *visible* bilingualism; often the only one, as the language problem has encouraged the use of alingual symbolism on Canadian stamps.

The current Canadian domestic postage rate on a first-class letter is 17 cents (Figure 32). It will be noted that, unlike the U.S. or South Africa, Canada no longer uses the symbol ¢ or c after the figure of value; it must simply be inferred that, even in these inflationary days, the denomination is expressed in cents and not in dollars. This elimination of the c or ¢ (both had been used) occurred in 1962 and was, once again, the result of an Anglo-French linguistic difference, in this case one of dubious linguistic validity. Some Francophones contended that the correct French equivalent for English cent was sou, and that the abbreviation should therefore be s, or that there was no standard French abbreviation. This assertion is doubtful. Sou is, of course, an old, long-obsolete French coin once equivalent to five centimes. Its memory lingers on in Québec, as in France, in much the same way as the recollection of the Sterling penny remains among the descendants of the people of the former British colonies of North America. But just as the word penny is a colloquialism, not found on coinage or in formal usage, so sou is not a standard, contemporary French equivalent for cent; on the contrary, cent, identical to English, is standard French.⁶

In the eyes of many observers, the country most similar to Canada in the historical confrontation of two ethnolinguistic groups with a territorial base and different historic and cultural self-images, is Belgium. Both countries arose as geopolitical unwilling unions or makeshift alliances of conflicting self-interests in the nineteenth century. In both, a hitherto socio-economically and politically subject self-perceived minority has carved out a political territory in which it can be *maître chez soi* (master in its own house), and in both the linguistic character of the nation's metropolis, in which the two ethnolinguistic groups co-exist uneasily, is a point bitterly disputed by both sides. Unlike Canada, however, Belgium, when first established in 1830, was officially unilingually French, and its first stamps shortly thereafter were likewise in French only. Then, *mutatis mutandis*, replacing French by Dutch the Flemish minority fought for and gradually attained its right to linguistic visibility.

The first inscriptions in Dutch (then referred to in Belgium as Flemish) appeared in the 1880s (a little before French in Canada, as shown above). But the order of the country name was still conventionally "Belgique—België," in French then Dutch. The interwar period brought a more equitable alternation of languages, but French still had the upper hand, generally coming first, for example, on the top value of a multi-value stamp series.

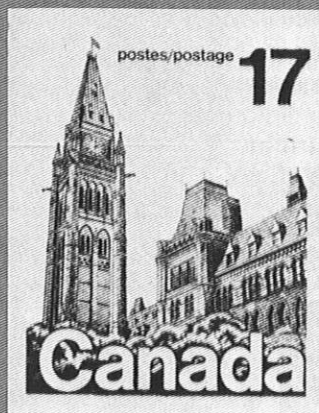
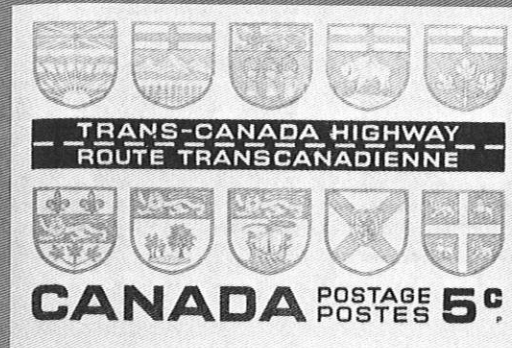
The German occupation during World War II brought an administration determined to discredit the francophone upper classes and to favor the Germanic-speaking Flemish *volk*, though anti-German resistance was strong on both sides, while the leading pro-Nazi political figure, the Rexist Léon Degrelle, was a francophone. On stamps issued during World War II Dutch inscriptions are often found to the left of those in French, and the Dutch-first stamp might well be the top denomination in a multi-value series. After World War II there was some regression. Thus, in 1952, a stamp commemorating a happening in the Flemish part of the country, an exhibition on Charles V in Ghent, was still inscribed "Belgique—België" rather than the reverse, and the French commemorative inscription was still uppermost. This would be unthinkable today.

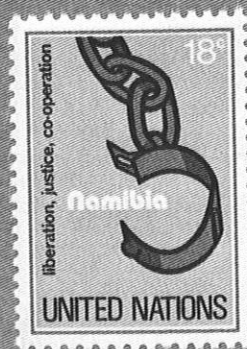
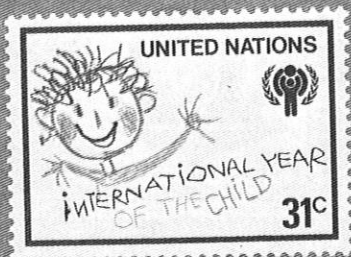
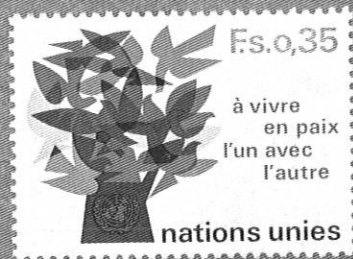
Today, events in the unilingually Dutch-speaking part of the country normally have a unilingual commemorative inscription in Dutch (Figure 33), and the bilingual country name on such stamps is in the order Dutch—French. For events and figures in the francophone territory, of course, the procedure is reversed. Figure 34, for example, shows a French-first inscription for the francophone "Centre d'action laïque." The historic character who is depicted—Till Eulenspiegel, as he is generally known in English under a German name, or Tjil Uylenspiegel in Dutch, was indubitably a Flemish-speaker, and is indeed regarded today as a symbol of the Flemish folk character. But as the Action laïque is a francophone organization, his name is given in its French form "Thyl Uylenspiegel" first (in the left margin).

National events, concerning the whole country, are commemorated bilingually, preferably in *se-tenant* pairs (the French-derived term, used in English, refers to two stamps of different design, printed together in the sheet) (Figure 35). Others, commemorated on a single stamp, have to choose which language to place first (Figure 36); the following stamp issue of Belgium will then select the other language for precedence.⁷

The above study has focused on the stamp issues of individual countries and dependent territories. Let us close with a brief sketch of language policy on the postal issues of the United Nations. The first UN stamps were released in 1951, for use only at UN headquarters in New York. Most values of the definitive series bore the name United Nations in all five official languages of the period, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. However, the 2¢ and \$1 denominations carried the name United Nations in Chinese, Russian and Spanish only, while the other two official languages, English and French, were used for an additional inscription, "Peace-

Figures
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33 36





Justice-Security," but not for the UN name (Figure 37). The 20¢ value bore the name United Nations in French and Spanish only.

Full linguistic equality, then, was not entirely observed on the first New York UN issue. Selectivity among the official languages has continued to the present, and is indeed a growing tendency. The first commemorative issue of the UN, for example, while it identified the organization in all five official languages, provided the commemorative inscription, "San Francisco 1945. Birthplace of the Charter" in English only. Since then, a gradually diminishing number of UN New York issues have borne a commemorative inscription in five languages: one such is shown in Figure 38, and dates from 1957. The San Francisco commemorative established a precedent of selecting one or two of the official UN languages for use as "appropriate" to a particular topic. Thus, Figure 39 shows the use of Spanish on an issue of 1961 honoring the Economic Commission for Latin America. It is one of a pair, the other being in English. In this instance one notes the exclusion of French, an official UN language and the language of Haiti as well as of the French dependencies in the Americas. Another discriminatory example is the 1960 pair of values for the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. As Figure 40 shows, the area covered by ECAFE includes China; however, Chinese, an official language of the UN, did not appear on either stamp, but only English and French. (Note that this UN stamp issue, unusually, follows the British example by making the identity of the issuing entity only implicitly clear. No wording such as "United Nations" is used, only the UN symbol. In effect, the UN was contravening the regulations of its own specialized agency, the Universal Postal Union, as regards identification of the issuing body.)

In 1969, the UN office in Geneva, Switzerland, began to issue its own stamps. The designs were generally coordinated with those of UN New York. Some were inscribed in the five official languages; a few in French and English. But most UN Geneva issues are exclusively in French (Figure 41). This, in turn, has stepped up an already incipient tendency for more and more issues of UN New York to be inscribed in English only. Thus, for example, the New York issue for the International Year of the Child, 1979, appeared in English only (Figure 42), although there were two denominations in the set, 15¢ and 31¢. Previously, and especially prior to the launching of the UN issues from Geneva, a two-value set would typically have been inscribed in English (the lower value, for first-class letter postage in North America) and in French (the higher value, for overseas airmail.) The emergence of French-inscribed issues for Geneva has

Figures
opposite
37 38 39
40 41
42 43
44 45

brought about a corresponding drop in the use of French on the New York issues.

As a consequence of the Six-Day War and Middle East crisis, Arabic was voted the sixth official language of the UN in 1973. This has remained a dead letter as regards stamp-inscription policy. A recent definitive issue of UN New York continues to bear the same five official languages as in 1951 (Figure 43). A recent General Assembly resolution has called upon the UN Postal Administration to issue a stamp commemorating Palestine and the rights of the Palestinians. Such a hotly controversial issue may possibly include an Arabic inscription for the first time. It would continue a precedent established by the Namibia commemorative (Figure 44).

As the result of a treaty between the government of Austria and the United Nations, UN definitive stamps denominated in Austrian schillings were issued on August 24, 1979 (Figure 45). They were inscribed in German exclusively. Thus, the UN is in the paradoxical situation of using a non-official language (German) regularly on certain of its postal issues, while an official language (Arabic) has not yet been featured on a single UN stamp.

To conclude, we hope that we have demonstrated that visible language is an important matter on the postal issues of countries in many parts of the globe, as well as on the stamps of the United Nations and its offices. Nothing is left to chance in stamp design, and a careful examination of such designs will permit an interpretation of current language policy at a given date in a given country or stamp-issuing entity.⁸

1. On Francophonie, see particularly Brian Weinstein, "Francophonie: International Languages in Politics," in Albert Verdoodt and Rolf Kjolseth, eds., *Language in Sociology*. Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 1976. (Institut de Linguistique de Louvain. Bibliothèque des CILL. 5), pp. 265-304. Also, though far from impartial and now heavily outdated, consult Auguste Viatte, *La Francophonie*. Paris: Larousse, 1969. (Collection La Langue vivante).

2. On bilingualism in South Africa, the latest and best work is: L. W. Lanham and K. P. Prinsloo, eds., *Language and Communication Studies in South Africa. Current Issues and Directions in Research and Inquiry*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1978.

3. See Robert Petersen, "Om grønlandsk—og om den nye grønlandsk retskrivning," in *Språk i Norden*, 1975.

4. On language policy and planning in Norway, works in English include: Einar Haugen, *Language Conflict and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966; Lars S. Vikør, *The New Norse Language Movement*. Oslo: Forlaget Novus, 1975; see also Richard E. Wood, "Twenty-one Recent Scandinavian Books on Language Policy" (review essay), *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 2 (1978), 35-49.

5. See, for example, Klaus Törnudd, *Svenska språkets ställning i Finland*. Helsinki: Holger Schildts förlag, 3rd, revised ed., 1978; Christer Laurén, ed., *Finlands svenskan. Fakta och debatt*. Borgå: Söderströms, 1978; Mirja Saari, "Über die sprachlichen Verhältnisse der Åland-Inseln," *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 2 (1978), 27-32.

6. The literature on language policy in Québec and Canada is enormous; let us cite here the leading bibliography: William F. Mackey, *Le bilinguisme canadien: bibliographie analytique et guide du chercheur*. Québec: Centre international de recherche sur le bilinguisme, 1978; also a useful book in English on Québec: John R. Mallea, *Québec's Language Policies: Background and Response*. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1977; and note also the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Official Languages*, Ottawa, yearly since 1971 (report for 1970).

7. As for Canada, the literature on Belgium is enormous and sociolinguistic work is closely intertwined with work in politics, demography, history, etc. Let us cite only the best, yet incomplete and not updated, bibliography: Albert Verdoodt, *Les Problèmes des groupes linguistiques en Belgique. Introduction à la bibliographie et guide pour la recherche*. Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 1977. (Reprint of 1973).

8. Other studies of language policy on postage stamps include: Ralph S. Walker, "Languages on Stamps," *Scott's Monthly Stamp Journal*, 50(9): 289, 292-3, 301 (December, 1969); reprinted in *Topical Digest* 7 (1972), 23-5. On language teaching with stamps, a pioneer article is Ian F. Finlay, "Postage Stamps in Modern Language Teaching," *Modern Languages*, 49 (1968), 119-121, and specifically for French, Maurice G. Elton, "Culture via Airmail," *Foreign Language Annals*, 12-2 (1979), 117-120. The present author has examined French-language usage on postage stamps more specifically in Richard E. Wood, "Teaching Francophonie with Postage Stamps," *The Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes*, 36-1 (October, 1979), 105-124.