On April 20, Hans Henrich Hock, Professor Emeritus in Linguistics at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, delivered the REEEC Noontime Scholars Lecture entitled “Language, Linguistics, and Ideology in Eastern Europe and Beyond.” One of the major themes underpinning Professor Hock’s lecture was the relationship between ideology and language - primarily, how ideology can, and often does, influence alterations in language and the way people use it. Both in history and at present, the relationship between ideology and language has exacerbated antagonisms between nations and ethnic identities.

Hock illustrated this situation in the case of Hungary, Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. Currently, Hungarian nationalism rejects the Hungarian language’s Finno-Ugric affiliation. Instead, it emphasizes unproven and thus questionable linguistic ties to the Hunnic and, at times, Sumerian languages. In the case of Macedonia, Hock pointed out that Greek nationalists are making a contentious argument linguistically when they maintain that Macedonian is a modern Slavic language and therefore has no historical basis. Indeed, it was not until 1944 that Macedonian was officially recognized as a literary language. Greek nationalists believe that Ancient Macedonian was a Greek dialect with the main differences being in aspiration, for example, ph-b, th-d, kh-g. In contrast to the Greek nationalists’ weak case for Ancient Macedonian as a Greek dialect, Hock finds the linguistic differences between Serbian and Croatian languages correspond to the differences one finds between British and American English. There are obvious lexical distinctions, but not so much as to warrant separate languages.

Hock also talked about the sites of Arkaim, located in the Russian steppe north of Kazakhstan, as well as the site of Andronovo in western Siberia. Both are ancient archeological sites, the latter of which is known for the first discovery of horse and chariot burials. Important, the area is considered a cradle of Indo-European and Indo-Iranian language groups, as it is widely held that these peoples must have originated in the same area where there were domesticated horses. According to Hock, these areas are significant to new agers, neo-pagans, occultists and national extremists. National extremists often use Arkaim to construct myths to benefit their cause. Hock warned that culture must not be associated with language, and that greater cooperation among historians, archeologists and linguists should occur in order to combat the rise of inaccuracy.

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