

Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture 12

THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF LANGUAGE



# Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture

Edited by PETER BURKE and RUTH FINNEGAN

This series is designed to address the question of the significance of literacy in human societies: it assesses its importance for political, economic, social and cultural development, and examines how what we take to be the common functions of writing are carried out in oral cultures.

The series is interdisciplinary, but with particular emphasis on social anthropology and social history, and encourages cross-fertilisation between these disciplines: it is also of interest to readers in allied fields, such as sociology, folklore and literature. Although it includes some monographs, the focus of the series is on theoretical and comparative aspects rather than detailed description, and the books are presented in a form accessible to non-specialist readers interested in the general subject of literacy and orality.

#### Books in the series

- 1 NIGEL PHILIPPS: 'Sijobang': Sung Narrative Poetry of West Sumatra
- 2 R. W. SCRIBNER: For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation
- 3 HARVEY J. GRAFF: Literacy and Social Development in the West: A Reader
- 4 DONALD J. COSENTINO: Defiant Maids and Stubborn Farmers: Tradition and Invention in Mende Story Performance
- 5 FRANÇOIS FURET and JACQUES OZOUF: Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry
- 6 JEAN-CLAUDE SCHMITT: The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children since the Thirteenth Century
- 7 JEFF OPLAND: Xhosa Oral Poetry: Aspects of a Black South African Tradition
- 8 RICHARD BAUMAN: Let Your Words be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-Century Quakers
- 9 BRIAN V. STREET: Literacy in Theory and Practice
- 10 RICHARD BAUMAN: Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative
- 11 AMY SHUMAN: Storytelling Rights: The Uses of Oral and Written Texts by Urban Adolescents
- 12 PETER BURKE and ROY PORTER (Eds): The Social History of Language
- 13 JOEL SHERZER and ANTHONY C. WOODBURY (Eds): Native American Discourse: Poetics and Rhetoric
- 14 ARON IAKOVLEVICH GUREVICH: Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception (forthcoming)
- 15 JAMES J. FOX (Ed.): To Speak in Pairs: Essays on the Ritual Languages of Eastern Indonesia (forthcoming)
- 16 MAUREEN PERRIE: The Image of Ivan the Terrible in Russian Folklore



# THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF LANGUAGE

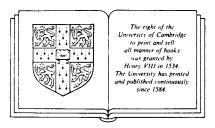
Edited by

## PETER BURKE

Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge

## ROY PORTER

Senior Lecturer in the Social History of Medicine, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London



### CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

NEW YORK NEW ROCHELLE MELBOURNE SYDNEY



> Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP 32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, USA 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1987

First published 1987

British Library cataloguing in publication data
The Social history of language.—
Cambridge studies in oral and literate culture; 12).
1. Sociolinguistics—History
I. Burke, Peter II. Porter, Roy, 1946—
401'.9 P40

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data
The Social history of language.
(Cambridge studies in oral and literate culture; 12)
Bibliography.
Includes index.
1. Sociolinguistics. 2. Social history.
I. Burke, Peter II. Porter, Roy, 1946–
III. Series.
P40.S544 1987 401'.9 87-6560

ISBN 0 521 30158 0 hard covers ISBN 0 521 31763 0 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2003

wv



## **CONTENTS**

	List of illustrations page Notes on contributors	ge vii ix
1	Introduction Peter Burke	1
2	The uses of literacy in early modern Italy Peter Burke	21
3	Proverbs and social history  James Obelkevich	43
4	The language of quackery in England, 1660–1800 Roy Porter	73
5	Verbal insults in eighteenth-century Paris  David Garrioch	104
6	Le langage mâle de la vertu: Women and the discourse of the French Revolution  Dorinda Outram	120
7	Words and institutions during the French Revolution: the case of 'revolutionary' scientific and technical education <i>Janis Langins</i>	136
8	The sociology of a text: Oral culture, literacy and print in early New Zealand  D. F. McKenzie	161
9	The historian and the Questione della Lingua Jonathan Steinberg	198
	Bibliographical Essay Index	210 214

v



## **ILLUSTRATIONS**

Plate 1	Sir William Read's bill, reproduced by kind permission of the Wellcome Institute Library, London.	93
Plate 2	From a bas-relief on a statue of Queen Victoria. This and the following plates are reproduced by kind permission of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.	162
Plate 3	From the verso of the Declaration of Independence.	185
Plate 4	From a sheet supplementary to the Treaty of Waitangi	186



#### NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Burke was educated at Oxford and taught at the University of Sussex from 1962 before moving to Emmanuel College, Cambridge in 1978. His books include Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy (1972), Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe (1978), and The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy (1987).

James Obelkevich is Lecturer in Social History at the Centre for the Study of Social History, University of Warwick. After receiving degrees from Columbia University and the University of Cambridge, he was Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Princeton University. He is the author of Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825–1875 (1976) and editor of Religion and the People, 800–1700 (1979), and co-editor (with Lyndal Roper and Raphael Samuel) of Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy (1987).

Roy Porter read history at Christ's College, Cambridge. His publications include The Making of Geology, Images of the Earth (edited with L. J. Jordanova), The Ferment of Knowledge: Studies in the Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Science (edited with G. S. Rousseau), A Dictionary of the History of Science (edited with W. F. Bynum and E. J. Browne), and The Enlightenment in National Context (edited with M. Teich). He is now working on a history of psychiatry in Britain, and is also researching the history of quack doctors, and the history of medicine from the point of view of the patient. He is Lecturer in the Social History of Medicine at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London.

David Garrioch studied French and history at the University of Melbourne, and subsequently completed a D.Phil at Balliol College, Oxford. He has held Junior Research Fellowships at Wolfson College and St Anne's College, Oxford, and now lectures in European history at Monash University, Melbourne. He is the author of Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740–1790 (1986).



## x The social history of language

Dorinda Outram gained her Ph.D from the University of Cambridge in 1974, and has published extensively on French and Italian history of the revolutionary period. Her most recent book was Georges Cuvier: Vocation, Authority and Science in Post-Revolutionary France (1984). She is now engaged in a full-length study of the political culture of the French Revolution, and is the co-editor of Women, Families, Careers: Women in Science 1789–1968 (forthcoming). She currently teaches at University College, Cork.

Janis Langins is a former chemical engineer, now historian of science and technology, who is currently a research associate at the Institute for the History of Science and Technology at the University of Toronto. He is the author of La République avait besoin des savants (1987). His present research is on the history of French engineering at the end of the eighteenth century.

D. F. Mckenzie, a New Zealander, is Reader in Textual Criticism, and Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford. He is currently editing the complete works of William Congreve for Oxford University Press.

Jonathan Steinberg has been University Lecturer in History, and Fellow and Tutor at Trinity Hall, Cambridge since 1966. He is the author of Yesterday's Deterrent: Tirpitz and the Birth of the German Battle Fleet (1965) and Why Switzerland? (1976). He recently translated Pino Arlacchi: Mafia, Peasants and Great Estates: Society in Traditional Calabria (1983), and is also a regular contributor to New Society.