

Remember me when far far off: Multilingual Memory Albums in Wisconsin and the Duchy of Schleswig

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Memory albums, sometimes known as poetry albums or autograph books (German *Stammbuch*; Danish *stambog*), have existed in some form for centuries, with earlier forms in German-speaking areas beginning in the 16th century, often in scholarly circles, and eventually moving to wealthy, or upper-class circles (Tienken 2015: 143-144). By the 19th century, the practice was common among many members of society and were often kept by school-aged children or young adults. Regardless of time period, these albums are considered to have been kept for the purposes of group affiliation and for collecting personal memories for the future. They are considered a useful source in historical sociolinguistic research, allowing for the reconstruction of social networks and group identity building (Tienken 2014: 105; cf. Schnabel 2003).

This project compares the memory album of Alex Krueger, a Dodge County, Wisconsin resident, with the memory albums of Marie Jörgensen of Holm (Flensburg) in the Duchy of Schleswig. Both owners resided in bi- or multilingual areas in the late 19th century. Krueger, who was the ancestor of German-speaking immigrants to Wisconsin, grew up in an area where many community members spoke both German (standard High German, and/or a dialectal variety) and English. Jörgensen was from and collected her memory albums in the Duchy of Schleswig, a region spanning an area of c. 70 km north and south of the modern German-Danish border and historically known for its unique quintolingualism (Fredsted 2004: 32-33; Langer 2011: 169). Four of the region's five languages (arguably a fifth, generally not included in that count—Petuh, an urban vernacular of Flensburg) would have been present in Jörgensen's surrounding. These include two autochthonous regional languages which were generally only spoken (Low German, South Jutish) and two allochthonous standard languages (Standard High German, *Rigsdansk* (Standard Danish)) which—as the languages of education and written documents—are the focus of these semi-formal, semi-private documents in this study.

Data from the Krueger collection are limited to one memory album, as only one such album exists in the collection. The album is made up of 22 entries written from 1882-1887 by a variety of authors, including men and women, children and adults, and family and friends. The entries are written in both German and English, with some entries in both languages. The Jörgensen collection is comprised of four different albums, written from 1887-1898, with entries in Danish and German. These albums also exhibit some variety of authors and variation in languages used.

The presentation focuses on a comparison between the two collections including not only linguistic data, but also addressing the sociohistorical and sociopolitical settings in which they were each created. Preliminary results show a more balanced split between languages in the Krueger album than in the Jörgensen albums, which tend to only have rare German entries interspersed among Danish entries. The Krueger album also exhibits more language mixing in individual entries and has multiple authors who composed entries in both languages. Thorough analysis and comparison of these memory albums will show how multilingual communities used their languages in creative writing situations, and how multilingual communities compare (or not) in regard to what their underlying language ideologies allow in this text type.

References

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