The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe’s Modern Past

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30. See, for two recent examples, Pino Apule, Terrani. Tutto quello che è stato fatto perché gli italiani del Sud divorassero meridionali (Milan: Piemme, 2010); and Giordano Bruno Guerri, Il sangue del Sud: Antistoria del Risorgimento e del brigantaggio (Milan: Mondadori, 2010).

31. See, for example, especially Carmine Calacino et al., La storia proibita. Quando i Piemontesi invasero il Sud (Naples: Accortocentone, 2001).


34. See Gigi Di Fiore, I vinti del Risorgimento. Storia e storie di chi combatté per i Borbone di Napoli (Turin: UTET, 2004). See also, for an opposite view, the recent polemical work by Alessandro Barbero, I prigionieri del Savoia. La vera storia della condizione di Finestrella (Rome: Laterza, 2012).


38. Del Boca, Italiani, brava gente?, 57.


5

Language Policies in the Duchy of Schleswig under Denmark and Prussia

Nils Langer

In attempting to define the concept of colonialism, Sebastian Conrad warns us that we need to be mindful not to consider just any form of oppression or dominance as a type of colonialism. Scholarly work, which sees colonial aspects or tendencies in almost any form of asymmetrical relations, removes any kind of specificity from the term colonialism and thus it loses its distinctiveness from other forms of power exertion. Key to Conrad’s understanding of what constitutes colonialism are at least the following three aspects: (1) coloniser and colony exist in different socio-political structures (Ordnungen), (2) coloniser and colony have different histories and (3) colonisers consider themselves to be at a more advanced intellectual and technological stage. This third element entails a feeling of moral and cultural superiority over the colonised, which serves as a platform to justify the exploitation of the colony: ‘[T]he colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule’. This aspect of moral and cultural superiority applied to other population groups will be investigated in this chapter.

Prototypically, colonialism involves a ‘relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders’, and colonisation takes place by means of the acquisition of new territory, migration, wars of conquest or the establishment of complex naval networks. However, inspecting the mechanisms of political rule, the exploitation of groups of people and the suppression of minorities in, say, Europe, has suggested that colonial practices are not exclusively reserved for territories overseas. The chapters in this volume provide ample evidence for the fact that ‘structural, political and economic inequalities between regions within a nation state’ can be found in many European countries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These instances of colonialism within Europe are characterised by an
asymmetric relationship between capital city and particular regions, similar to those found between metropolis and colony in more typical cases of colonialism. Importantly, such cases of internal colonialism are more than just the economic exploitation of particular regions: in addition, elements of a superior feeling as regards cultural norms and moral values are considered to be the key. Such superiority can be defined by various cultural variables such as ethnicity, language or religion, and they can be used to exclude members of the ‘colony’ from social climbing into higher social or political positions.

To test such theoretical considerations for the identification of examples of internal colonialism, it is important to investigate case studies involving suppression and exploitation of groups of people – defined as distinguishable and distinct by language, ethnicity or religion – in order to see how widespread colonial aspects of suppression and exploitation really were. In this chapter, I will investigate the case of nineteenth-century Schleswig-Holstein, a famous example of a national conflict involving two wars between Denmark and the German Federation (Deutscher Bund) in the middle of the century and a number of political acts of liberalisation (or ‘suppression’, depending on one’s perspective) such as the ‘freeing’ of Germans from the Danish yoke after the dark years from 1850–1863 and the ‘freeing’ of Danish people from the German yoke after the Prussian ‘occupation’ from 1867–1918/20. I will examine these political acts to identify to what extent they imply or even express colonial notions of ‘moral and cultural superiority’. As a historical sociolinguist, I will focus in particular on policies aimed at achieving the Danisation or, where applicable the Germanisation of the ‘other’ people by way of Language Policies. While such policies were aimed at creating or denying particular national identities, I will conclude that they fall somewhat short of colonialist tendencies, even though some contemporary commentators make explicit comparison between the Schleswig-Holstein case and recognised examples of internal and external colonialism. In particular, the case of Schleswig-Holstein fails to demonstrate clearly any kind of religious or civilisatory mission and also offers no evidence for Osterhammel’s stipulation that, in colonialism, the colonisers reject ‘cultural compromises with the colonized population, [and] [...] are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule’.  

It is well known that language can carry powerful connotations of group identity (= nation), since Herder’s (1744–1803) and Fichte’s (1762–1814) thoughts on what constitutes a nation: a common spirit (Volksgesitt), cultural traditions and a common language. Promoting or suppressing particular languages thus has the potential of creating or denying national identities, as is well known for the nineteenth century, the Age of Nationalism, but also for current discussions on the rights of minority and regional languages today (e.g. the case of the ‘creation’ of distinct Serbian and Croatian languages or distinct Czech and Slovakian languages simultaneous with the political separation of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia). The case of the oppression of French dialects since at least the French Revolution is well known: French was the language of the Republic and all other languages were deemed unsuitable. However, just like the case of Schleswig-Holstein spelled out below, achieving a monolingual nation was not easily achieved: Weber called the fact that many school pupils ‘did not speak French or spoke it poorly’ ‘the worst problem plaguing schoolteachers through the whole of the nineteenth century’.7

In prototypical cases of external colonialism, the language question usually has a very practical side to it, in that, typically, the colonising country will use a language in its official domains different from the indigenous languages of its colonies. Such linguistic differences can serve a useful distinguishing purpose as they preclude the colonised populations from understanding the missives, laws and internal communications of the coloniser and hence permit the coloniser to retain the powerful tool of information dissemination.8 However, the linguistic differences between coloniser and colonised can also be a serious obstacle for the smooth running of affairs in the colony, as colonisers are dependent on the availability and trustworthiness of interpreters. In her study of language policies in the German colony of Togo, Sokolowsky shows the changing views on how to best deal with the problem. Togo was in many ways a typical colony of commercial exploitation (cash-crop), with only very few Europeans actually living there (a maximum of 368).9 Ewe was the largest local language though by no means the only one, and English was widespread as a trading language along the African west coast. The resident German merchant companies not only used English as their lingua franca but also English currencies and measurements.10 School education had been in the hands of church missions for the initial period of colonisation, who preferred to use the native language of the children as the language of instruction. German was only taught as a foreign language to the most gifted pupils, who were thought to be usable as future scribes, local civil servants and interpreters. However, with the turn of the twentieth century, the German state took a greater interest in the linguistic Germanisation of the population. A heated debate at the 1904 annual meeting of the national Colonial Society (Deutscher Kolonialgesellschaft) revealed the principal positions: should the language of instruction in colonial schools be the native language,
which, however, would confirm a cultural distance between natives and German 'motherland' or should the language of instruction be German, and thus aid the understanding among natives that they were a part of the German empire and subjects of the German Kaiser? If the latter, however, this could have also meant that the natives might understand what the Germans were saying to each other; examples of natives found with copies of Vorwärts, the newspaper of the revolutionary Social-Democrat party, were cited as a warning of how teaching the natives German might end in uprising and unrest. Despite these warnings, a school reform was implemented in Togo in 1906, promoting the use of German and suppressing the use of the native language(s) and English. This reform had been abolished again by 1910, largely because of the realisation that the practical obstacles to achieving a reasonable linguistic competence in German were too great. A final episode in German colonial language policies was the creation of a Kolonial-Deutsch ('Colonial-German', from 1910), a 'Pidgeon-Deutsch' [sic], with a reduced grammar and vocabulary, which was to bridge the problem of enabling the natives to communicate with the German masters but without allowing them to learn so much German that they might be able to understand native German, either as written texts or spoken conversation. This drives towards a Kolonial-Deutsch ceased with the end of German colonialism in 1919.

This example shows us the importance – both practical and ideological – of language policy in general and the language of schooling in particular as a means of exerting colonial power: both to suppress the indigenous and to create a new, all-encompassing national or imperial identity. Before we turn to the issue of language policy in the Duchy of Schleswig\textsuperscript{22} as a test case for the identification of internal colonialism, it is necessary to offer a short introduction to the historical sociolinguistics of the area, in particular with reference to the nineteenth century.

In 1460, the King of Denmark was elected duke of Schleswig and Holstein. As a consequence the two duchies since then had both belonged to the Oldenburg monarchy. Three important points need to be made in this context:

1. While the Duchy of Schleswig was a fiefdom of the Kingdom of Denmark, the Duchy of Holstein was part of the German Empire, later the German Federation (Deutscher Bund), and thus any constitutional demands pertaining to the member states of the Deutscher Bund also applied to Holstein, but not to Schleswig.

2. There were also significant sociolinguistic differences between the two Duchies: while Holstein was diglossic Low German–High German, with the former as the mother tongue of virtually everyone

Figure 4  Herzogtum Schleswig, Holstein und Lauenburg, 1849
Source: www.sps.uni-kiel.de.
latter area proved to be the most controversial part for the implementation of Danish and German language policies.

3. While, during the nineteenth century, Standard Danish and High German were the only languages considered appropriate for official language use and the written language domains, High German had commanded a very strong position as the language of the Court, the military and many aspects of cultural life in the Kingdom of Denmark until the late eighteenth century.13 In Copenhagen, Danish was the language of the middle and lower classes and German and French were the languages of the upper classes, at least until 1772. In Schleswig-Holstein, this general acceptance of High German (usually simply referred to as Deutsch, not Hochdeutsch or Schriftdeutsch, in contemporary sources) as the only acceptable language for administration, court proceedings, education and church remained for much longer, as will be shown below, with some added complexities across the century.

For centuries, the Oldenburg monarchy had been a composite state holding together a number of territories. The southern parts of modern Sweden were part of the core of the Danish kingdom, but the monarchy also consisted of Norway, Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands and a number of smaller colonies in Africa, India and the West Indies, as well as the duchy of Schleswig and the German territories of Holstein, Oldenburg (until 1772) and Lauenburg (1814–1864). For this state it was possible to talk about a multilingual reality, where the co-existing languages never caused any conflicts. One's allegiance was to one's monarch and the country he ruled, the helst eigen or Gesamtstaat (whole-state) of Denmark. Only with the emergence of nationalism as a socio-cultural concept in the late eighteenth century, we do witness an awakening of the consciousness of differences. In Schleswig and Holstein, a Gesamtstaatspatriotismus continued until the late 1830s: until then, national differences were rarely mentioned and Carl Julius Weber’s statement that, just as people from Inner Pomerania (Vorpommern) feel Swedish, so do Holsteiners feel Danish, rather than German.14 This quickly changed towards a very strong self-definition along nationalist lines from the 1840s: German-minded Schleswig-Holsteiners craved a greater degree of independence from the Danish kingdom, demanding a liberal constitution for the double-duchy, while Danish-minded Schleswigers demanded a closer political and legal bond with the Kingdom of Denmark, even if this were at the cost of dividing up Schleswig and Holstein. The most controversial disputes were fought over the Duchy of Schleswig since Holstein was almost completely German minded and German speaking. Schleswig, however, was divided into a Danish northern half, a German southern half, a Frisian west coast15 and a central mixed belt (Mittelschleswig ‘Central Schleswig’). Two wars were fought over this issue (1848–1851, with a Danish victory, and 1863–1864 with a German victory under Prussian and Austrian leadership), demonstrating how powerful nationalist identities had become. Such identities were not defined along ethnic lines but by more or less individual choice of one or the other ‘mindedness’ (Gesinnung, synedelighet) and were expressed with flags, colours, songs and festivals.16 Language, too, became an important identifier for national identities but not a crucial one; plenty of German speakers were Danish minded, even though being able to speak the nationally appropriate language had high symbolic value, a situation that carries on to the present day.

In what follows, we will examine the various language policy measures that were proposed and, largely, carried out throughout the century. It will become clear that a number of different motivations were behind these; to what extent such motivations reflected colonial attitudes will be discussed in the concluding section.

Until the early nineteenth century, language policy measures did not exist in any meaningful way for Schleswig or Holstein. High German had been replacing Low German as the written language since the Reformation,17 but this went largely unnoticed on a larger scale: the reasons were economic (High German was the language of trade and social (High German commanded much more prestige, though again with some exceptions), not political or nationalist.18 In the southernmost Danish-speaking areas of Mittelschleswig, where South Jutish was the everyday language, language shift had been taking place to High German, sometimes via Low German, not Standard Danish. By the eighteenth century, even the church language had largely become High German and by then, for the common man, High German had been accepted as the ‘holy’ language, to be used in church services and ritual.19 Importantly, these instances of language shift were, on the whole, not guided by any ulterior political desires to divide the population or to promote one nationality over another. Furthermore, the drive towards the replacement of local and regional languages by High German as the only acceptable written and official language was not restricted to Schleswig and Holstein, but can be seen throughout the German-speaking areas in Europe.

Early attempts to introduce Danish as a church and school language where it was also the everyday language under Christian VI (1730–1746)
never really got off the ground, so that the first actual language rescript in Schleswig-Holstein was by King Frederik VI (1808–1839), who, in 1810, addressed the divergence between the people's language and the language of church, schooling and court proceedings in the Duchy of Schleswig and requested that in those districts where Danish was the common language (Almencentret Sprog), it should replace German as the language of church services, schooling and court trials.20

What appears to be a moderate demand by, after all, the king of the country, was rejected by the civil servants in Schleswig on two grounds: firstly, given that they only spoke German, it would have been time consuming and impractical to demand that they learn Danish, and, secondly, the Danish spoken in Schleswig was so far removed linguistically from Standard Danish that using the latter in official discourse would not actually improve comprehensibility for the people: in other words, they argued that Standard Danish was as far removed from South Jutish as High German was. Since High German was already established as the language of learning, education and trade, whereas the local Danish was seen to be a confused mix, a patois or a 'raiven' Danish, there was little gain in changing the contemporary practice.21 Consequently, this rescript was not implemented and the language question disappeared again for a few decades.

The question returned, however, with the establishment of estate assemblies in Schleswig and Holstein in the 1830s. Delegates from the Danish-speaking areas in Northern Schleswig argued that having Danish as the language of administration and schooling, where it was the community language, was a matter of achieving greater justice and access to matters of public life in these parishes. Importantly, until the 1840s, this debate did not feature any nationalist intentions.22 The debates in the assembly, which were fuelled by intense lobbying in the form of mass petitions signed by ordinary people, led to a recommendation to the King (Christian VIII, 1840–1848), who, in 1840, issued a rescript which in many ways mirrored the efforts of his predecessor in 1810. The language of administration and the courts of justice should follow the language of church services and schooling; in mixed areas, both languages would be accepted and, consequently, legal and administrative documents were to be issued in both (High) German and (Standard) Danish. In this, the King followed closely the recommendations of the estate assembly, yet almost immediately he was faced with significant protests from pro-German minded families from rural Northern Schleswig, who argued passionately that they should be granted at least three to six hours of German lessons at school. Their request was approved and
the Danish government. This military victory was followed by a rigid policy of the southwards advancement of Danish language and culture (Danmark til Ejderen 'Denmark as far south as the River Eider'), which involved the removal of German-minded vicars, teachers and civil servants, the ban on singing songs and flying colours which represented either Germanness or Schleswig-Holstein, and the replacement of the German language with Danish in official domains, for example, schooling, administration and church services. These policies of Danisation were badly received, both in Schleswig-Holstein and among commentators abroad, even though the Danisation only pushed Danish southwards by a relatively short distance, that is within the mixed belt, and it excluded, for example, the German-speaking city of Flensburg. In his history of Schleswig, the Danish historian Mourtiz Mackeprange stated that nothing had been as damaging for the reputation of the Danish administration as its language laws from the period after 1850. These rescripts led to massive protests among German-minded people, both by way of concerns raised by individuals, for example, vicars and teachers, and by way of mass petitions: Scharff counted as many as 38,700 signatories for petitions against these measures. These policies were in place until the German (= Prussian-Austrian) defeat of the Danish army in the 1864 war.

For our interest in the existence of colonial motivations or persuasions, it is important to investigate the extent to which the pro-Danish language policies mentioned above were aimed at eradicating or suppressing either the German language or the German cultural identity. It is therefore helpful to use Head's term of the 'moral or cultural superiority', quoted above, to test to what extent this existed in Schleswig-Holstein in the 1850s. It is certainly possible to find heated statements complaining about regius of terror ('Gewalttherrschaft') but this applies both to Danish sentiments regarding the status of German (both the language but also, e.g., the behaviour of civil servants) in the time before 1848, as well as to German views on the period between 1850-1863:

For the Danes, our German nationality is not only not holy or untouchable but it is the focus of a battle of extinction (Vertilgungskampfes); Denmark is not satisfied with exploiting the lower classes, it wants to hunt and provoke them continuously.

Importantly, in the period before the 1850s, opposition was not expressed with reference to metaphors of hate towards the other, either German or Danish-minded people; instead, resistance was expressed towards politicians ('a certain party') or civil servants, etc. With the military conflict of 1848–1850 came the unsurprising polarisation of the enemy, often created by intellectuals such as journalists, politicians, vicars and officers. This led to the description of the enemy as evil, ruthless, or cowardly, and the opposition of, for example, German honour to Danish enslavement. However, reading through a corpus of letters and diaries from private soldiers (both Danish and German) who fought at the decisive battle of Istedt (25 July 1850), it is striking how the most negative terms with which Germans refer to the Danes are Feind ('enemy') or Däne ('Dane'), that is, without any particularly negative attributes. Göttsch found different examples in her corpus of Istedt-letters, describing the Danes as brutal or uncivilised (kulturlos). However, the evidence never consisted of personal experiences but simply simplistic stereotypes; indeed, the personal experiences of the soldiers stood in direct contrast to these stereotypes. We thus do not often find statements referring to the Other with the 'moral and cultural superiority' required to satisfy our definition of colonial tendencies or attitudes. The same applies to the Danish view of the German enemy. Frost reports that in his corpus of some 800 Danish soldiers' letters, the (German) enemy was seen as a military, not an ethnic enemy. The enemy, who was referred to as Prussian, German, Schleswig-Holsteiner or rebels (opprørerne), was generally afforded respect for his manliness. Similarly, the term de danske normally referred to the Danish soldiers, not the Danes more generally, and hence supporting the view that was seen as a purely military conflict, not a national war. In the Danish eyes, the conflict of 1848–1850, and its aftermath until the Second War of 1864, had the nature of a civil war between members of the Danish state (Gesamtstaat 'whole-state'): it was driven by political disagreement, not matters of race, religion or economics (at least not officially), and it was fought with political means, which, as we saw above, aimed at obtaining greater cultural and linguistic cohesion in the Duchy of Schleswig by way of suppressing expressions of German identity. Contemporary and retrospective accounts of the time amongst German-minded people would suggest that it was seen not just as a time of hardship but a time of oppression by the Danish administration, even though the punitive measures were comparably mild as compared with other cases elsewhere in Europe or the world. Presumably, it is because the German-minded communities had felt themselves to be true subjects to the Danish king that they felt particularly betrayed by the Danish sanctions against all things German. However, it does not appear justified to see the definitions of colonialism or colonialist tendencies satisfied in this case.
This leads us to the second case study of this chapter: the Germanising measures carried out by the German or, more narrowly, Prussian administration after the annexation of Schleswig and Holstein as a province of the Kingdom of Prussia from 1867 to 1920.

The defeat of the Danish army in 1864 led to the occupation of Schleswig-Holstein by Prussia and Austria that year and, after the defeat of the Austrians by Prussia, Schleswig-Holstein was incorporated as a Prussian province in 1867. The German-minded Schleswig-Holsteiners were delighted to be liberated from the Danish oppression mentioned above. They were less delighted, however, about not being granted political independence, even though being part of Prussia also meant that much needed administrative and legal reforms took place and that the recognition of its strategic military importance led to welcome financial investment in the province, for example, the establishment of Kiel as a major naval base. Our topic of internal colonialism relates to the treatment of the Danish population which, because of the change in the political status of the Duchy of Schleswig, now formed a sizeable minority on the northern border of the Prussian kingdom. Initial hopes of a division of Schleswig into a northern, Danish, half and a southern, German, half were disappointed, largely, it is now generally agreed, due to a failure of Danish diplomacy. What is of interest to our concerns are the measures for which language policy was used by the Prussian administration and how this affected the Danish population in Schleswig.

A wave of Anti-Danish actions followed the Danish defeat in 1864, for example, a ban on the singing of Danish songs with insulting or rebellious content (1865), or the public display of the Danish national flag, the Danebrog, which remained illegal until 1920. The anti-German language rescripts were immediately abolished so that, formally, language policies were decided on a very local level again, though with a clear bias towards German-language schooling and church services in the mixed areas of Mittelschleswig.

With the formal integration of Schleswig and Holstein into the Prussian kingdom in 1867, and the creation of the German Empire under Prussian leadership in 1871 came a number of laws and reforms which promoted the German language as the only language of public discourse. In many ways much more directed at the Polish-speaking communities in the east, which in the late nineteenth century made up as much as 10 percent of the Prussian population (compared to a mere 0.6% of Danish speakers) these laws and rescripts were aimed at the suppression of anything that was not culturally and linguistically German, at a time when these non-German communities had easy or automatic access to Prussian and German citizenship. The main pillars of language policy in Prussia consisted of a mix of actual laws and ministerial decrees. In particular, these were, firstly, the Spracherlass ('language decree') of 1871, mandating that in – the Danish-speaking – Northern Schleswig, all schools had to offer six hours per week teaching German, and more if desired by the majority of the Schulinteressen ('people involved in schooling'); secondly, the Geschäftsprachengesetz ('Law on Use of Language with State Authorities') of 1876, which, after some six years of deliberations and delay, declared that German was the only language for all state authorities, civil servants and political institutions of the state and that consequently, any written communication with such bodies must be conducted in German; thirdly, a Verfügung ('decree') of 1878, doubling the number of German lessons from 6 to 12 and making German the language of instruction in history, geography, mathematics ('Kopfrechnen'), singing and physical education ('Turnen'); and fourthly, the 1888 Verordnung ('ordnance') for Schleswig-Holstein, stating that the language of instruction be German in all schools. Where it was absolutely necessary, Danish might be used in Year 1 of elementary school, and as a further concession, Danish could continue to be the language of religious education.

Thus there is a clear, if somewhat slow, progression from a re-establishment of German as an acceptable school language after the period of Danisation, to making German the only acceptable language of schooling. The official motivations for such language laws were two-fold: on the one hand, it was argued that German was the language of the German fatherland and thus to deprive the Danish communities of German would imply their exclusion from economic and intellectual advantages. Introducing German classes in Danish schools thus served an emancipatory function, at least officially:

Since the introduction of German school lessons is simply aimed at satisfying these needs and is quite independent of questions of nationality or mother tongue of the affected population, the only obligatory part of this decree is restricted to the use of German as a school subject in elementary [= primary] schools, whilst its use as a language of instruction is only to be implemented with the explicit wish of those school communities affected.

The relative mildness of this decree is symptomatic of initiatives from within Schleswig-Holstein, which frequently allowed for long
transitional periods (a change of language has to happen, but only within 10 or 12 years) and which often acknowledged the necessity that, on a local and district level, civil servants needed to be able to communicate in Danish, long after the formation of the German Empire. Missives from Berlin, on the other hand, were often more strongly worded and demanded a more rigid German-only policy. In 1876, the Schleswig-Holstein provincial government afforded civil servants in rural parishes, who did not speak German, the right to continue submitting their reports and declarations to their superiors in Danish amissive that was repeated in more or less the same wording by the Royal Government in Berlin as late as 1892.44

What is also striking from the quotation above is the explicit denial that the Sprachetass had anything to do with the bigger question of language and nationhood. This is echoed in the Geschäftssprachengesetz of 1876 (here in first versions from 1873): German was to be learnt because it was the language of the state and, while a state should respect the freedom of any community whose mother tongue is different from that of the majority, this should not lead to the recognition of their language as equal to the majority’s language, as debated in the Prussian Upper House:

A state which cherishes national concerns is obliged to apply the national language, as a symbol of the state’s unity, in all of public life. Where a state includes (umschließt) a population with a different language, the state’s respect for the freedom to practise this language in education and common speech must never mean that this other language be recognised as equal to the state’s language.45

The imposition of German as the only language of public administration was explicitly not to be understood as a suppression of all things Danish. Indeed, when Danish lobby groups protested about the new language policy, the Prussian state’s reply was that any such protest was inappropriate since only the language of the state (Staatssprache) was affected; no communal language (Volksprache) was being forced to change.46 This should not distract from the fact that the German imperial state was authoritarian and repressive, identifying ‘enemies of the state’ (Reichsfreiheit) on national or political grounds (Danes, Poles, Social Democrats, trade unionists) and making illegal or severely restricting their activities, including the ability to meet in groups. Nonetheless, the Danes (and Poles) continued to return members of parliament to the German and Prussian parliaments. A number of efforts were carried out to retain and strengthen the cultural and linguistic resistance of the Danish community to the Germanising efforts of the German state: teacher training was provided in a church seminary (Predigerseminar) in Haderslev (1870), a society for the protection of the Danish language was founded in 1880 and, on the eve of the big language decree of 1888, as many as 7 percent of all teachers in Schleswig were unable to teach in German.47 The 1888 decree, which removed the Danish language from all lessons except for two hours of Religious Education per week, was harshly criticised in contemporary sources. While the radical pro-German lobby argued that the decree did not go far enough since the Danish spoken in Northern Schleswig was a mere ‘potato Danish’ (Kartoffeldänisch) and thus required complete extinguishing, the more liberal German press warned that such harsh actions would only fuel the fires of protests.48 The regional and national Danish press, on the other hand, argued that since Danish had always been the language of North Schleswig there was neither desire nor need to change the current situation. In response to the decree, a number of self-help measures were enacted, for example, the publication of primers and song books, aimed at self-education in families.49 It was noted subsequently that the children’s fluency in – presumably standard – Danish had become quite impoverished because they were only exposed to it in two hours of RE lessons per week.

Such anti-Danish measures continued with increasing severity until the end of the German Empire in 1918, in particular, but not exclusively under the government of Ernst von Köller (Oberpräsident ‘ provincial governor’ 1897–1901), who exercised particularly harsh and petty policies during his time as president.50 Danish assemblies had to have a permit from the German state, meetings were monitored by police agents – which was not always easy because of the language barrier – and could be shut down for the tiniest of reasons. From 1907, discussions increased to extend the Geschäftssprachengesetz to private societies as well, and in 1908, the Reichsvereinigungssegesetz was passed, that in all those areas of the country where at least 40 percent of the population spoke German, all private societies, too, would have to conduct their business in German.51 Danes and Danishness were clearly oppressed in the Prussian period, in particular through official actions by the state. The perception of these actions by commentators in both Northern Schleswig and in Copenhagen was, unsurprisingly, fiercely antagonistic. The great intellectual and literary critic, Georg Brandes (1842–1927), an expert in German matters, who had lived in Berlin for five years and who had enjoyed close friendships with German colleagues, was
outraged and disappointed by the German oppression. In his collection of articles *Sønderjylland under Prøjksisk Tøyk* (1919), written between 1899 and 1905, he complained bitterly about the lack of respect shown by the Germans towards Danish cultural achievements. In particular he compared the situation with the infamous Russian treatment of Poles and argued that the Danish situation in North Schleswig was worse. In fact, the treatment experienced by the Danes would have been harsh even for an African tribe (*Negerstamme*):

To conduct yourselves in this way would be hard even if it were to be applied to a Negroes' tribe. Yet the Danish language is a language of culture, despite its restricted distribution. The immoral self-admiration and complacency, which the Germans continuously complain about when they see it amongst the French, see the forceful violation of suffocating the Danish culture with the pressures of German culture, as a beneficial deed; an aim, which justifies the means.52

In his writings, Brandes highlighted that Danish culture was at least equivalent to the German one and that in many areas, agriculture, literature and fine arts, German had been greatly influenced by Danish innovations. For this reason, he complained, the oppression of Danes in Schleswig was particularly mystifying, unjust and disappointing. Such sentiments can be found — and for good reason, too — in the contemporary press, both in Danish newspapers based in Copenhagen and Schleswig and in the liberal German press.53

The two case studies discussed in this chapter demonstrate how language played a key role in the national conflicts between Germans and Danes in the nineteenth century. From the 1840s onwards, the use of a particular language in the region of Schleswig became a marker of a particular national identity. When political and military conflicts arose on the basis of national affiliation — should Schleswig be tied more closely to the kingdom of Denmark or join the German federation? — it was felt by the respective winning side that language policies could help shift loyalties. In particular the promotion of the winner's language — and the suppression of the loser's language — in schooling is highly significant: the new generation should be growing up with a different language loyalty than its parents' generation. As with so many similar cases across the world, this failed. In fact, the restrictive school policy if anything confirmed the division in the population and fuelled resistance. Language shift did take place but only at a very slow pace and in no tangible way because of official language policy measures.

Returning to our original question of whether Schleswig-Holstein can be considered as a case of internal colonialism, the answer can only be a fairly convincing no. We find no genuine targeted economic exploitation of the area (= colony) as a whole or particular parts of the population (= colonised). Economic discrepancies between Schleswig and Holstein had existed independently of the troublesome political events at the time. As regards notions of 'moral and cultural superiority', we simply witness passionate debates, which, especially at times of war and intense denial of rights, turned into feelings of hate; yet there are no consistent or prominent examples of portraying the other side as humanly inferior, be this on grounds of race, culture or moral behaviours. Colonial attitudes were never intended nor manifested by either Danes or Germans. The absolute elimination of native language and culture and their assimilation was not really the goal of most administrators, but rather, as part of a larger project of nationalisation and national unity, their segregation onto a subordinate plane in order to maintain a particular hierarchy of authority and prevent rights-claims.

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Notes

10. Sokolowsky, Sprachenpolitik, 46.
12. "The real problem areas were restricted to the Duchy of Schleswig since it was here that both German and Danish languages, nationalities and sentiments co-existed, while Holstein was only ever (Low)-German speaking."
13. For details, see Vibeke Winge, Deutsche Dänische und dänische Deutsche (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992).
17. For an overview, see Nils Langer, ‘Low German’.
23. Landesarchiv Schleswig 18.51.1.
24. See Rohwedder, Sprache und Nationalität, 80ff.
26. Vicar of Groß- and Klein-Solt, 1840, cited in Rohwedder, Sprache und Nationalität, 90; my translation, NL.
32. M. Schlichting, Los von Dänemark? Warum? (Kiel: Akademische Buchhandlung, 1864), 8, my translation, NL.
33. Rohwedder, Sprache und Nationalität, 283.
38. See, among others, Frandsen, Dänemark.
39. Verordnungsbuch ‘ministerial decrees’ 1864, 90, as quoted in Thomas Peter Petersen, Preußens Sprachpolitik in Nordschleswig (Münster: WW Universität, 1995), 80; my translation, NL.
40. Petersen, Preußens Sprachpolitik, 67.
42. See Leuschner, ‘Die Sprache ist eben ein Grundrecht’.
43. Amtsblatt (‘list of ordinances’) 1871, 99f., as cited in Petersen, Preußens Sprachpolitik, 85f., my translation, NL.
44. Petersen, Preußens Sprachpolitik, 114 and 128.
45. Herrenhaus Drucksache Nr. 152, 27.4.1873, cited in Petersen, Preußens Sprachpolitik, 104, my translation, NL.
46. Petersen, Preußens Sprachpolitik, 110.
47. Petersen, Preußens Sprachpolitik, 182.
49. Petersen, Die dänische Oppositionspresse, 44.
52. Brandes, Sønderjylland, 7.
53. Petersen, Die dänische Oppositionspresse.