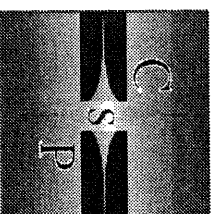


**Dynamics of National Identity and Transnational
Identities in the Process of European Integration**

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BALKAN LANGUAGES AND THE CHALLENGES OF EU INTEGRATION: MINORITIES AS MAJORITIES AND MAJORITIES AS MINORITIES

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Although the Western Balkans today is generally construed as Albania and former Yugoslavia, from the point of view of Balkan linguistics, Greece is also in this region. Here I shall examine some recent policy and political developments through the prisms of linguistics and of language ideology, i.e., the ways people think about language. Because language is both act and artifact – it exists in documents and the minds of speakers but at the same time it is constituted by everyday practices – the intersections of linguistics and politics are complex. This is true in Western Europe no less than in the Western Balkans, as can be seen, for example, in official French persecution of regional languages from 1794 to 1951, the 1972 statement of Georges Pompidou, then President of France, that there was no place for regional languages in France, the exclusion of Breton schools from French public funding in 2002 (ar Mogn and Hicks 2003), the recent contrtemps over the use of Occitanian in examinations (FELCO 2006), etc. It can even be argued that EU ideologies of inclusiveness are being reflected in certain types of linguistic research that peripheralize the Balkans. In order to provide the necessary context for the following discussion, I will give a brief outline of some basics of Balkan linguistics.

As the systematic study of human language, modern linguistics has its origins in nineteenth century historical linguistics, whose major achievement was the discovery of regularities in linguistic change that enabled scholars to trace the systematic development of languages from earlier forms, e.g. the reconstruction of Indo-European and the relations among its descendants. This so-called genetic linguistic model, however, was inadequate for explaining the diverse realities of human linguistic development. In the twentieth century, among the most important discoveries in historical terms was the fact that languages in contact with one another can borrow not only vocabulary, but also, potentially, any element of grammatical structure. In this regard, the Balkan languages

(traditionally: Romanian, Aromanian, and Megleno-Romanian, all Romance languages; the Slavic languages Bulgarian and Macedonian, as well as southeastern dialects of the former Serbo-Croatian; Greek; and Albanian, with Turkish considered as a marginal element) have played a seminal role, one similar to that of the Indo-European languages for historical linguistics in the nineteenth century.

The special relationship holding among the Balkan languages is that they constitute what Trubetzkoy (Trubetzkoy 1923; Trubetzkoy 1928) first identified as a *linguistic league* (Russian *языковые союзы*, German, *Sprachbund*), showing striking convergences in their structure while maintaining their distinctiveness in vocabulary and pronunciation. The essence of Trubetzkoy's model can be formulated in the following manner: Languages that show common features owing to descent from a common ancestor, e.g. the Indo-European languages, constitute a linguistic family, while languages that possess common features through structural convergences owing to prolonged multilingual contact, as is the case of the Balkan languages, constitute a different conceptual unit, the linguistic league, for which the field of study is areal linguistics. Typological linguistics examines linguistic similarities due to the nature of language itself rather than to historical relatedness.

Since the end of World War One, the Balkans have been constructed as an image of political fragmentation to the extent that "*Balkanize*" has entered our vocabulary as a verb meaning 'break up a system into little pieces'. More recently, Todorova (1997) has popularized the use of the term *Balkanism* as a variant of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, i.e. the creation of an exotic or problematic Other against which the West can define itself as "normal." Yet, ironically, in the field of linguistics *Balkanism* has a much older meaning introduced by Seliščev (1925), one that is precisely the opposite from the popular use of *Balkanize*. In linguistics, a *Balkanism* is a feature common to the Balkan languages as the result of mutual borrowing, i.e. it is evidence of shared communicative practices.

Linguistic Balkanisms have resulted from centuries of interpenetrating multilingual social intimacy in a context of coexistence and distinctive identity maintenance. Among the first Balkanisms to be observed and identified as a shared grammatical feature (Kopitar 1829), was the replacement of infinitives with analytic subjunctive clauses (e.g., Macedonian *počnuva da ođi*, Albanian *fillon të shkojë*, Romani *lel te džal*, etc. literally 'he begins that he goes' vs. English 'he begins to go'). Crucial to this and many other developments – some common to all the Balkan languages and some shared by only some of them – is that a combination of dating available from historical records plus the evidence that the

relevant developments did not take place in adjacent or related languages outside the Balkans enables us to locate the pervasive adoption of the changes precisely during the late medieval and, especially, the Ottoman period (although the first attestations are often earlier; see especially Assenova 2002: 195-220). Moreover, it is precisely the languages of the Western Balkans, i.e. Macedonian, Aromanian and Albanian (especially Tosk, the dialects south of the Shkumbi River in Central Albania, as well as southwestern Macedonia and all of Greece) as well as the northern dialects of Greek and the West Balkan dialects of Turkish, that show these developments to their fullest extent within their respective groups. We should note here that despite Sandfeld's (1930: 3) explicit exclusion, in fact Romani shows significant Balkan influence in its grammar, and those dialects that remained in the Balkans show more influence than those that left, e.g. in future formation (Boretzky and Iglá 2004: 138). Moreover, the Balkan dialects of Judezmo have Balkan features that did not develop, e.g., in North Africa, e.g., a higher degree of the use of reduplicative object clitic pronouns (Wagner 1914: 130-131).

The infinitive is freighted with considerable significance in the Balkans because its replacement by the analytic subjunctive is a distinguishing feature of Balkan versus non-Balkan Slavic and the presence of a new infinitive is a salient characteristic of Geg Albanian (the dialects north of the Shkumbi, and all those of Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia, and also most of Macedonia). Moreover, because infinitives are found in the languages of Western Europe, there are language ideologists that valorize them as "Western." Thus Croatian language planners claim the infinitive and eschew the analytic subjunctive, although in speech Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, and Montenegrins all use both (except in the Torlak dialects of southern Kosovo and southeastern Serbia, where the infinitive is completely lacking). In Albanian, the exclusion of the infinitive from the standard language is a hallmark of its Tosk dialectal base, and while the Geg speakers of Kosovo were reluctant to challenge the unity of the standard prior to the 1999 war, more recently the Kosovar academic establishment is seeking to have the Geg infinitive accepted as part of the unified standard. They refer to this as "opening up the standard." (It should be noted that Geg intellectuals in Albania, especially Shkodra, sought this type of reform as soon as communism fell.) The acceptance of the infinitive has a number of additional implications, including the acceptance of the Geg future construction and short participle. Thus, for example, the participle of the verb "go" cited above is *shkuar* in Tosk and *shtuem* in Geg, but Geg also has a short participle *shtue*, and the Geg infinitive is formed with the preposition *me* plus the

short participle. The sentence cited above in its Geg form would be *fillon me shtue*, and while the Tosk future is the classic Balkan type using a particle derived from the verb meaning "want" plus the analytic subjunctive, e.g. *do të shkojë* "he will go", the Geg type uses a conjugating form "have" plus the infinitive, e.g. *ka me shtue*.

Outside the academic establishment, insistence on Geg in Kosovo is gaining more momentum, with some even calling for a separate Kosovar Geg-based standard. The polemics of this situation are especially complex, and in order to understand them some historical background is necessary. Prior to World War Two, there was no official Albanian standard, although Elbasan Geg was the favored form in official communication. During the 1950's, a Tosk-based standard was pursued in Albania, while a Geg-based standard was pursued in Kosovo. Yugoslav policy labeled the former standard language *albanski* and the latter *shqiptar*. (The latter term is a Slavic adjective derived from Albanian *shqiptar* "Albanian person". Although it was neutral in popular usage into the 1950's, by the end of the 1960's it had acquired strong pejorative connotations, and today it has become entirely pejorative, much like English *Polak* and *Yid*, which are the normal terms for "Polish person" and "Jewish person" in Polish and Yiddish, respectively.) The intent in 1950's Yugoslav policy was arguably to create a separate Kosovar identity thus effectively preventing any possible revanchism. In 1968, however, in a climate of political upheaval in Yugoslavia, Albanian intellectuals in Kosovo officially decided to adopt the Tosk-based standard of Albania as a statement of unity. The official orthography was agreed on in 1972 and a dictionary was produced in Albania 1980. In current polemics in some Kosovar and Albanian Geg circles, however, the Tosk-based standard is attacked as an undemocratic, communist imposition (such was also the case in the diaspora, see Pipa 1989), and some Kosovars also denounce the 1968 decision as having been taken under instructions from Tito and therefore likewise undemocratic. The irony in this latter denunciation is that at the time it was taken, the decision was perceived as defiance of Yugoslav attempts to separate Kosovar consciousness from Albania, while now it is precisely that separation that is being promoted by some as the true defiance of Kosovo's communist past.

Although the Geg/Tosk division within Albanian might yet produce a second standard, it would still be seen as part of a single Albanian language, and it would still be called *shqip* by its speakers. It is thus the case that of the Indo-European language groups represented in the Balkans, Slavic is in a unique position insofar as its Balkan territory – which itself consists largely of contiguous speech communities – is divided between

those dialects that show significant linguistic Balkanization and those that do not, and, at the same time, only Slavic experienced the development of several distinct standard languages from its contiguous dialectal base. The dividing line begins in Kosovo, at the Albanian border just south of Dečani and goes northeast to Obilić at the confluence of the Lab and Slinica rivers, then follows the Lab northeast and turns east south of Podujevo, then north to Stalać (west of Prokuplje) then east across Mount Rtnji, south of the River Crna and continues to the Bulgarian border south of Zajčar.

It is precisely in this context of dialectal division and divergent standardizations that I wish to turn to some current issues in the Slavic dialectology of the Balkans. Dialectological maps are more than just tools of linguistics. While modern day political actors may hotly deny that such maps still imply territorial claims as they did in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see for example the maps in d'Estounelles de Constant 1914), they nonetheless have implications for identities and loyalties that can translate into a variety of resources. Thus, for example, after 1991, it took a while for various agencies in Washington, DC to realize that, contrary to claims still being made at that time by the Bulgarian government, Macedonian is not a dialect of Bulgarian (any more than Norwegian is a dialect of Swedish, despite a relatively high degree of mutual comprehensibility), and that therefore separate language-appropriate resources were required.

For the former Serbo-Croatian, I will adduce here two interesting examples: one from Croatian dialectology and the other from Gora, a region of seventeen Muslim villages in the southwesternmost corner of Kosovo and nine adjacent villages in Albania. The population of Gora used to be entirely Slavic-speaking but is now mixed Albanian and Slavic. These two examples are connected insofar as they both pose problems for the relationship between language and ethnicity, and, as we shall see, also for Croatian in its relation to Balkan linguistics. I shall begin with the end of Serbo-Croatian, namely the last joint dialectological map of that language (Brozović and Ivić 1988). This map was divided into three parts according to the three major dialect divisions, Čakavian, Kajkavian, and Štokavian. The first two dialect groups are spoken only in Croatia, the last including parts of Croatia and all the remaining former Serbo-Croatian-speaking former Yugoslav republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia).

Maps of Serbo-Croatian dialects in the second Yugoslavia reflected the fact that dialects were defined by geography, not ethnicity. Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians from the same village spoke the same dialect. The tendency

to describe dialects in terms of ethnicity rather than geography, which began in the 1970's and contributed to Yugoslavia's break-up (see Greenberg 1996 for a detailed account), has reached its logical conclusion in current Croatian dialectological practice as illustrated by Lisac (2003), which uses the Štokavian map of Brozović and Ivić (1988), claiming that any dialect spoken by an ethnic Croat is Croatian. The title of Lisac (2003) treats Štokavian and Torlak as separate dialects. This practice follows Ivić (1958; 1963), which treat Torlak as distinct from or at least a special unit within Štokavian. On the other hand, Ivić (1956; 1985) and Brozović and Ivić (1988) do not make this distinction. It is arguable that Lisac is following Ivić (1958; 1963) in order to make the point that precisely the dialects that have not been associated at all with Croatian in the past are now claimed as Croatian, too.

Thus, wherever there are Catholic villages there are Croatian dialects. One result of this ethnicization of former Serbo-Croatian dialectology is that the Balkanized dialects of the former Serbo-Croatian that were called "Serbian" on the basis of geography (all being spoken in southern Serbia and Kosovo) are now claimed by Croatian and Bosnian as well. This same logic has been extended by Bosnian political actors to claim any Slavic dialect spoken by Muslims as Bosnian. Most recently these claims have been extended to the dialects of Macedonian Muslims and, in a reversal of Bulgarian dialectologists' *Drang nach Westen* (see below), even Bulgaria's Pomaks (Slavic-speaking Muslims, mostly in the Rhodope Mountains).

The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences has continued claiming that Macedonian and the Torlak dialects of southeastern Serbia are Bulgarian (Kochev 2001). This is possible in part because government recognition was extended only to the Macedonian standard and not to the dialects. In February 1999, the Bulgarian government recognized "the official language of the Republic of Macedonia". As of this writing, however, the expression meaning "Macedonian language" is still not used in Bulgarian government documents, including bilateral agreements with the republic of Macedonia (personal communication, Cvetan Grozdanov, President of the Macedonia Academy of Arts and Sciences).

Nonetheless, Bulgarian dialectologists have been curiously scrupulous in following the analyses of Serbian dialectologists. In Ivić (1956, 1958), the border between Macedonian and Serbian followed the political/administrative border between the Republic of Serbia (including Kosovo) and the Republic of Macedonia. The general Bulgarian dialect atlas of 1988 (Kochev 1988) included all of Macedonia, as well as much of eastern Serbia, but none of Kosovo. The South Morava dialects of

Serbia proper were excluded from Kochev (1988) but included in Kochev (2001). Already prior to their publication, however, P. Ivić was convinced by the arguments in Vidoeski (1986) that since certain crucial Macedonian dialect features extend into Gora (fixed antepenultimate stress, distinct reflexes of Common Slavic short high vowels, deictic definite articles, etc.), the Goran dialects should be classified as Macedonian. As a result the maps in Ivić (1985) and Brozović and Ivić (1988) exclude Gora from Serbo-Croatian. Bulgarian dialectologists then followed their Serbian counterparts in Kochev (2001), which included all of eastern Serbia in addition to Macedonia but still excluded Kosovo *except* for Gora, which it claimed as Bulgarian. In a similar vein, the Albanian press recently reported Bulgarian claims of 100 000 Bulgarians in Bulgaria with demands that they be provided minority-language schools in Bulgarian (*Shekulli*, 04.09.2007). The locations of these Bulgarians were precisely Gora, Golobordë (across the border from Debar in Macedonia) and Prespa (in South-Eastern Albania, linked dialectologically with adjacent Macedonian-speaking populations in Greece and the Republic of Macedonia). The first two populations are Muslim and have no minority language schools; the latter are Christians and have had Macedonian elementary schools through grade four since the beginning of the communist period. Since the break-up of Yugoslavia, Serbian dialectological opinion has retreated somewhat from that of the late 1980s and studies of the Goran dialects published in Serbia treat them either as Serbian or as a special transitional type (Mladenović 2001).

Meanwhile, in Gora itself, four Slavic identities compete for Goran loyalty: Bosniac, Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Serbian, to which can be added Turkish, Pomak, Albanian, and a distinct Goran identity. Ethnopolitical tensions between Gorans and Albanians in Kosovo run high, belying any attempt to explain these tensions in religious rather than linguistic terms. For the foreigner traveling in the villages of Gora in Kosovo and unsure of whether to address an unknown interlocutor with the Goran *dobar den* or Albanian *mireðtita*, the neutral greeting is the Turkish *merhaba*, although the Arabic (but in this context markedly Muslim) *[a]salam aleykum* is also used.

At the South-Eastern end of the Macedonian dialectological spectrum, in northern Greece, EU policies of regional and minority language protection have had only mixed success. On the positive side, in October 2005 the European Court of Human Rights found Greece in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights with respect to members of its Macedonian minority and ordered the government to pay 35 000 € in compensation to the European Free Alliance – “Rainbow” (in Macedonian

Vinožito), an ethnic Macedonian organization in Greece that had suffered persecution. Part of the funds were used to publish a book with the mixed Macedonian and Greek title *Bukvar agnostōstiko* (“Unknown primer” Vinožito 2006), which included a photo-reproduction of the Macedonian primer published in Athens in 1925 in accordance with the Treaty of Sèvres and the Charter of the League of Nations (but never distributed or used), a modern Macedonian primer, and several essays in Greek, English, and Macedonian on the Macedonian language in Greece. The book was thus aimed at both domestic and international audiences. Unfortunately, on 29 September 2006 in Thessalonica, at the inauguration of an exhibition of primers from all over the world by collector Juris Cibuls of Latvia, a Macedonian primer published in the Republic of Macedonia was removed by the organizers at the orders of the Deputy Mayor for Culture and Youth of that city.

Further east, however, in Greek Thrace, across from the Bulgarian side of the Rhodopes, where there is a Pomak population, a different set of contestations is being played out. Here, Turkish is the only recognized minority language and Muslim is the only recognized minority ethnicity. Greek publications such as the 1996–1998 issue of *Ellēnikē dialektologia* (Vol. 5, devoted to *Oi diglōsses omades tou ellēnikou hōrou* “Bilingual members of the Greek people”) even go so far as to call the Turkish of Greece *Mousoulimaniká Thrakēs* (Muslimish of Thrace) rather than *Tourtiká*, the Greek word for “Turkish”. Because the Greek state recognizes minorities on the basis of religion rather than language, Pomaks have no educational institutions and send their children to Turkish-language schools on religious grounds. (Macedonian-speaking Muslims in western Macedonia sometimes send their children to Albanian or Turkish schools, the crucial difference being that in Macedonia there are schools available in the children’s native language, so that a conflict arises between ideology and best educational practice.) While the Greek government continues to discourage Macedonian, however, it has recently permitted the publication of school materials in *Pomakiká* using the Latin alphabet and based on the Rhodopian Slavic dialects of Greek Thrace (Kokkas 2004). In Bulgaria, closely related dialects are considered Bulgarian and are spoken by both Christians and Muslims.

The influence of Turkish vocabulary on the languages of the former Ottoman Empire has been tremendous, and, in the colloquial Balkan languages of the early nineteenth century, its position was not unlike that of the French lexicon in English. With the rise of Balkan standard languages, however, large numbers of Turkish words were stylistically lowered and limited to colloquial usage or made obsolete. The process was repeated as

each language standardized, e.g. for Greek, Bulgarian, and Romanian beginning in the nineteenth century and Macedonian and Albanian in the twentieth. It is worth noting that many of these same words were eliminated from Turkish starting in the 1920s owing to the fact that they are ultimately of Arabo-Persian origin, and even in languages that standardized in the nineteenth century, anti-Turkism campaigns were also carried out in the twentieth. After 1989, however, there was resurgence in the use of Turksisms in formal discourse in all the ex-communist Balkan countries except on the territory of the former Serbo-Croatian. Outside of those territories, Turksisms were associated with the colloquial and therefore with democracy, whereas on the territory of the former Serbo-Croatian, Bosnian language planners laid claim to the Turkish heritage of Serbo-Croatian as specifically theirs on the basis of the association of Turkish with Islam (Friedman 2003: 1-30).

In the case of Romani and Aromanian, however, since literary norms are currently in the process of elaboration, the colloquial nature of Turksisms means that they are in competition with neologisms or loanwords from related languages and are available for language planners. The use of Turksisms in official documents indicates that the function of Turksisms in Romani and Aromanian are following their own path of development and are more resistant to stylistic lowering. This is illustrated in the translations of documents for the 1994 and 2002 Macedonian censuses, which were available in Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Romani, Aromanian, and Serbian. The form for data on dwellings had questions concerning household plumbing, and all those languages with established elaborated norms use euphemistic neologisms or recent borrowings as their official terminology for "bath" and "toilet": Macedonian *banja*, *klozet*, Albanian *banja*, *nevojtorë*, Turkish *banyo*, *banyo-gyakyolu*, Serbian *kupatilo*, *klozet*. The Romani documents however used the Turksisms *hamam*, *kenefi*, while the Aromanian used *hamam*, *hale*. *Hamam* was the standard Turkish word for "bath" but has come to mean "Turkish bath" or "public bath", while *kenef* and *hale*, which were once euphemistic in Turkish, are now considered vulgar in Turkish as well as in the other Balkan languages. These terms serve as clear and concrete examples of the resilience of Turksisms in Balkan languages that are currently in the initial phases of the process of standardization.

One can say, however, that in the context of the Balkans, English is the Turkish of the twenty-first century: it has become the lingua franca and, as elsewhere in the world, it is also the source of puristic anxieties. Because English is the vehicle of new technologies as well as the principal language of international politics and trade, in the Balkans, as elsewhere,

language establishments are expressing concern over the effect of English, especially on the lexicon. The power and prestige of English have resulted in a flood of new words and phrases, but the basic grammatical structures of the Balkan languages are no more affected by English than they were by Turkish. Concerns with purism now, as in the past, reflect anxieties about social and political control and intergenerational competition.

As knowledge of English has increased dramatically in the Balkans, as elsewhere, especially among young people, more people now know English than the languages of their neighbors. Moreover, owing to the influences of national ideologies and the compartmentalization of language instruction and language study, students of Balkan languages in the Balkans are taught differences and not shown the structural similarities that resulted from centuries of multilingualism and, arguably, peaceful coexistence. Native speakers of a language are not aware its underlying structures unless they learn it as an object of study, and such is also the case with regard to structural similarities for multilingual speakers in countries like Macedonia, studying the different languages in isolation, or learning them without formal instruction. I saw this first-hand in 2005 when I delivered a lecture in Albanian on the basic principles of Balkan linguistics to about 100 undergraduates at Southeast European University in Tetovo, Macedonia. Although these students all knew Macedonian, they were amazed at similarities to which their attention had never been drawn. It is thus the case that instruction in Balkan linguistics has considerable potential in creating a sense of mutuality, a potential that might still be realized.

This brings us back to the position of the Balkans in Europe. Recent research on language change and language contact has challenged Balkan linguistics from two opposing directions. On the one hand, arguments that structural borrowing does not occur or is extremely rare are bolstered by phonological data (Ringe et al. 2002; Labov 2007), although the data themselves all involve English, and the reliance of some approaches on the notion of "imperfect learning" (Myers-Scotton 2002) locates structural change in a realm perilously close to nineteenth-century ideas of "impurity." On the other hand, typological approaches to areal linguistics that I call "Eurological" argue for Europe as a convergence area with the core located at the Romance-Germanic border from Holland to Northern Italy, from which the Balkan *Sprachbund* is de-centered (Haspelmath 1998; Heine and Kuteva 2006). Thus, on the one hand, the type of language change that occurred in the Balkans is said to not occur, and on the other, if it did occur it was imported from outside the Balkans.

Balkan Slavic dialectological data, however, show that precisely the superficiality of morphosyntactic phenomena makes them amenable to structural borrowing, while at the same time phonological diffusion takes place without the transmission of structural constraints. Salient examples occur along the Albanian-Slavic contact zone. In morphosyntax, the spread of object reduplication and future marking with 'will' (and the relative grammaticalization of the future marker) serve as Balkan boundary markers that nonetheless operate along a cline. Thus, for example, while object reduplication of pronouns extends beyond the boundaries of Torlak into southern Montenegro, the phenomenon becomes increasingly attenuated and limited as one moves north of Macedonian. As indicated above, the boundary for the future marker using a particle based on etymological 'will' in Romani (*ka/mj*, etc.) coincides quite closely with the geographic boundary of the Balkan linguistic league, and yet within that boundary, Geg Albanian is usually described as using conjugating 'have' rather than an invariant particle based on 'will'. But this characterization is an oversimplification. The 'will' future replaces or competes with the 'have' future in Southern Geg and along Albanian-Slavic contact zones such as western Macedonia, northwestern Albania and adjacent Montenegro, the Preshevo Valley in Serbia proper, and elsewhere (See Friedman 2005 for details).

Balkan phonological phenomena, however, are micro-areal rather than macro-areal. Thus, for example, Albanian alveo-palatal /l/ competes with Slavic clear and velar /l/ differently in Eastern Montenegro, in southwestern Kosovo, and in western Macedonia. The different distributions in the three regions follow boundaries that also mark religious, clan, and urban/rural differentiation. Thus, while we can speak of a shared Balkan morphosyntax, it is more appropriate to speak of Balkan phonologies rather than Balkan phonology.

Finally, the dialectology and history of these phenomena demonstrate that while "Eurology" has ideological value and current interest, an attempt to project the present onto the past by conflating areal and typological linguistics obscures the role of the Ottoman Empire in Balkan linguistic convergence (Hamp 1977). We know from documentary evidence that it was precisely during the Ottoman period – when everyday communication within southeastern Europe was relatively free – that the Balkan linguistic league took its modern shape independently of developments in Western Europe (Assenova 2002: 195-220). This is not to say that some Balkan phenomena are not of much greater antiquity, nor is it meant to imply that other phenomena do not have pre-modern origins in individual languages. The point is rather than the crucial stages in the

formation of Balkan linguistic commonalities took place in the framework of Ottoman Europe. Now that these regions are in a new and intensive multilateral contact we can expect new changes to occur, and the past can be harnessed to inform the present in constructive ways, especially if we examine the development of Balkan linguistic mutuality during the early modern period. It provides a model that can be both ideologically rewarding and academically significant.

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