

Review Article: The Macedonian Dialects of Albania

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#1. Steinke, Klaus and Xhelal Ylli. *Die slavischen Minderheiten in Albanien (SMA)*. 1. Teil: *Prespa — Vërnik — Boboshtica*. (Slavistische Beiträge 458). Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2007. Maps. CD. 374 pp. Paper.

#2. Steinke, Klaus and Xhelal Ylli. *Die slavischen Minderheiten in Albanien (SMA)*. 2. Teil: *Gollobrda — Herbel — Kërchisti i Epërm*. (Slavistische Beiträge 462). Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2008. Maps. CD. 320 pp. Paper.

#3. Steinke, Klaus and Xhelal Ylli. *Die slavischen Minderheiten in Albanien (SMA)*. 3. Teil: *Gora*. (Slavistische Beiträge 474). Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2010. Maps. CD. 260 pp. Paper.

The Macedonian dialects of Albania were basically inaccessible from the outbreak of World War Two until 1989, and even after the opening of Albania, the work on these dialects has been piecemeal and scattered. Moreover, prior to World War Two, aside from some linguistic data in Seliščev (1931), only Mazon's monumental work on Boboshtica [Boboščica] and Drenova [Drenov^läne] (1936, 1965) gave detailed analysis of a very particular dialect, which, as we now learn, is no longer spoken in Drenova and is on the verge of extinction in Boboshtica, where only a handful of old people control the dialect. The three volumes under review here (henceforth SMA#1, SMA#2, SMA#3), are thus of tremendous value not only because they provide data never before available, but also because all of these dialects are endangered, and in some cases moribund. We thus have not only the first documentation for many of these dialects, but in a number of instances probably also the last. In addition to the wealth of printed material, each volume comes with a CD keyed to texts. The sound quality of the CDs is excellent, and the tracks are each saved as separate mp3 files, making them easily navigable.

SMA#1 opens with a brief introduction (9-20) presenting the five major Slavic speaking regions that survive inside the current Albanian state: 1) southeast—a dozen or so villages in the Korça district, most of them near Lake Prespa, (except, we can add, Lin, on Lake Ohrid in the Pogradec district); 2) east—15 of the 22 villages in Golo Brdo and two villages in Pole (Debarsko Pole), Dibra district; 3) northeast— nine villages in Gora, Kukës district; 4) northwest—Vraka and nearby villages on the south side of the east shore of Lake Scutari, Shkodra district, where the dialects are Montenegrin; 5) the village of Borakaj, near Durrës, settled by Bosniaks in the nineteenth century. Macedonian speakers also live in most major towns in Albania. When I was in Elbasan in 1994, having arrived in a car with Macedonian license plates, we were almost immediately surrounded by Macedonian speakers who were both curious and eager to talk. This section of SMA#1 also has a rich set of references to relevant previously published material. The rest of SMA#1 is divided into three sections: Prespa (21-252), Vërnik (Macedonian Vrbnik, 253-301), and Boboshtica (302-359). The appendix contains a text from Lin (360-363), two maps (364-365), a guide to the 66 CD tracks (366-367), lists of consultants (368-369) and a bibliography of c. 100 entries (370-374).

Each of the three dialect descriptions in SMA#1 has a brief introduction (21-38, 253-254, 302-306), which gives demographic and other census data, discuss social and cultural issues such as questions of identity, sociolinguistics, language contact, etc.

After each introduction comes a section on phonology (38-76, 255-262, 306-14) then morphology (77-171, 262-291, 314-336), followed by texts (172-252, 292-301, 337-359). All texts in all three volumes are identified by speaker (with age, gender, and level of education) and village. The phonology sections give useful synchronic and diachronic analyses, although more detail would have been helpful in some cases. Thus, for example, we are told that the Prespa dialects have fixed antepenultimate stress, but it is not clear whether the adverb *godinava* ‘this year’ (p. 170) is an exception (*godináva*), as it is in most of western Macedonian, or not. Stress is marked, however, for Vrbnik and Boboshtica, which is important, since there are numerous exceptions to the antepenultimate tendency. In the description of Vrbnik, the graphemes <l’> and <lj> seem to be used interchangeably, but, again, it is not clear. Likewise there is a question of whether or not /l/ is automatically palatal or alveopalatal before front vowels, or at least before /e/. The Prespa description covers the nine Macedonian speaking villages on the Albanian side of Prespa: Pustec, Šul’in, Globočeni, Gorna Gorica, Dolna Gorica, Tuminec, L’eska, Žarnosko, and Cerje. With the exception of Cerje, these toponyms were officially replaced with Albanian names in 1970: Liqenas, Diellas, Gollomboç, Gorrica e Madhe, Gorrica e Vogël, Kallamas (prior to 1970, Bezmisht), Lajthiza, and Zaroshka, respectively. The description is careful to distinguish among the individual villages and gives useful synoptic tables for the most interesting phonological reflexes, e.g., preservation of traces of nasality and also jekavism for jat. The sections on morphology are good about giving summaries of, e.g., person markers on verbs, but the distribution of stem-vowel reflexes must be deduced on the basis of examples, which, however, the authors give in abundance.

In addition to the Prespa villages, Vrbnik, and Boboshtica, as noted above there is one other Macedonian-speaking village in southwest Albania, Lin, on the west side of Lake Ohrid just across the border from Radožda in the Republic of Macedonia. According to local tradition, the village was founded by people from Radožda, and when I visited the village in September 2002, I confirmed that what remains of the Lin dialect—which began to die out with the influx of Albanian speakers after World War Two—has the same specificities as the Radožda dialect, which together with Mali Vljaj forms a sub-group of the Radožda-Vevčani dialect. The dialect of these four villages, is unusual and specific in that Vevčani is discontinuous with the other three villages, apparently having already separated by the fourteenth century, and the dialect has a phonological contrast between open and closed mid-vowels in stressed position in mono- and disyllabic words. In contrasting position, the open mid-vowels are frequently the reflexes of the older nasal vowels. We have an excellent description of the Radožda-Vevčani dialect in Hendriks (1976), which is not in SMA#1’s bibliography. At the time Hendriks was working, Lin was inaccessible, but based on my field work, it had preserved the Radožda system. The text from Lin in SMA#1, unfortunately, is not one of those recorded on the CD, and the transcription does not distinguish the open and closed mid vowels. On occasion, <ɛ> is used where the low or open /ɔ/ (perhaps phonetic [ʌ]?) would be expected, and line 12B p. 360 *znas* is presumably *znaš*. From the point of view of content and codeswitching, however, the text is fascinating. The maps are useful to a limited extent, but the reproductions are of poor quality, one map shows topography but neither map shows roads, and Lin is not on either of them.

SMA#2 is divided into two sections, one for Golo Brdo (Albanian Golloborda; 9-247) and one for two villages in Pole: Erbele (the Albanian is given as Herbel, but Herebel is the form used on all web resources) and Gorni Kärčišta (Kërçishti i Epërm; 248-282). This volume also comes with an Albanian-German glossary (285-290), a list of unusual forms (291-294) some of which are given with standard Macedonian equivalents and some with German translations, each identified by village, a family tree covering about six generations (p. 295), some locally published texts showing dialectal features (296-300), six maps (301-306), a list of consultants (307-308), an index of the 55 tracks on the CD (309-310), ten jpeg-photographs printed in black and white (311-315), and a bibliography of c. 100 items (316-320). The two descriptions are each provided with an introduction (9-40, 248-254) followed by descriptions and illustrative data for phonology (40-69, 254-259) and morphology (70-143, 259-271), followed by texts (144-247, 272-282).

The material in SMA#2 is a valuable supplement to that in Vidoeski (1998:213-245). In addition to the richness of the material, the data from Erbele ('Rbele) and Gorni Kärčišta (Krčišta) show that, pace Vidoeski (1998:244, maps 1 and 2), Macedonian is still spoken in Krčišta (point 61) as well as 'Rbele, which is mentioned (Vidoeski 1998:213) but not shown on any of the maps (it is located between Maqellare (point 65) and Peshkopi). The maps in SMA#2 are of mixed quality. The first three maps show the villages of Golo Brdo in 1497, 1913, and 1922. The 1497 map shows a number of villages that no longer exist, while the 1913 and 1922 maps show the different borders that existed at those two times, the latter of which is also the current border. The three maps from Vidoeski (1998), language, ethno-religious identity, and dialect group, are of only limited use, since the villages are all designated by numbers, but the key (Vidoeski 1998:213-214) was not reproduced. Vidoeski shows 16 Macedonian speaking villages in the Albanian part of Golo Brdo (points 12-17), whereas SMA#3 has data from 15 villages. There are a few discrepancies between the two. Both sources name Stebl'ò (Stebleva, 12), G'inovec/Ginec/Ginevci (Gjinovec 13), Klen'e (Klenja 14), Sebisht (Sebišta, 15), Lešničani (Lejčan 17), Golemo Ostreni/Ostreni Golemo (Ostreni i Madh 18), Malo Ostreni/Malastreni/Ostreni Malo (Ostreni i Vogël 19), Trebišta (Trebisht 20) Tučepi (Tuçep 21), Radoveš/Radoeš/Radoešt (Radovesh 22), Pasinki (Pasinka 23), Ladomerica/Ladimerica/Vladomerica (Lladomerica 24), Värnica/Vrmnica/Vrbnica (Vërnica no point). SMA#2 also has Kojavec (Kojovci), and Oržanova (Orzhanova), which are not mentioned in Vidoeski (1998:213-214), which, however, includes Okštun (Okshtun 16), Srpetovo (Serpetovo 25), Trbač (Terbaç/Torbaç 26), Ljubolezi (Lubolesh 27), and Gorica (no point). Except for Okshtun, these last mentioned villages are on the 1467 map of Golo Brdo in SMA#3 but not on the later ones, from which we must deduce that Okshtun is no longer Macedonian speaking and the other villages are no longer inhabited. As the material in this volume makes clear, the villages of Pole will soon go the way of Boboshtica and Lin, whereas in Golo Brdo, the situation is more comparable to Vrbnik or Prespa. Although, unlike in southeastern Albania, there are no minority language schools in Golo Brdo, the isolation of the region has been conducive to preserving the language, and small children are still monolingual in Macedonian. The materials also show that a variety of archaisms (e.g., 3 sg present *esti* 'is') and innovations (e.g. *ima bidenò* 'has been', *ima imano* 'has had') extend as far north as Pole,

thus significantly linking the dialects in SMA#2 to those described in SMA#1 as well as to Ohrid-Struga and Drimkol on the Macedonian side of the border.

SMA#3 is the first such description of the Albanian villages of Gora and is thus like a companion volume to Mladenović (2001), which covers the Gora villages in Kosovo. The Gorans are Slavic speaking Muslims whose dialect is claimed by Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria, a topic to which we shall return below. Like the first two SMA volumes, this one contains introductory material (9-42), phonology (43-67), morphology (68-166), and texts from each of the 9 villages where the dialect is still spoken. The appendices consist of an Albanian-German glossary (225-230), a list of unclear words, with contexts (231-237; some of these, e.g. *belki* ‘perhaps’ are obvious, but while the words are keyed to speaker and village they are not keyed to a track on the CD, which would have been helpful), a guide to the CD tracks (238-239), a list of consultants (240), five maps (241-245), samples of published texts in the dialect (246-250), a bibliography of c. 100 items (251-255), and ten jpeg-photographs printed in black and white (256-260).

There are a couple of discrepancies between SMA#3 and Mladenović (2001) with regard to which villages on the Albanian side of Gora still speak Goran. Both descriptions include Pakiša/Pakisht, Zapot/Zapod, Košarište/Kosharisht, Orgosta/Orgjost, Crnojjevo/Cërnaleva, Orešek/Oreshka, Borje, and Šištavac/Shishtavec. Mladenović (2001) includes Novo Selo on his maps (e.g. p. 87), but he notes (p. 36) that the population has recently emigrated and that it is now chiefly (*uglavnom*) Albanian. Novo Selo is excluded from SMA#3 (p. 241). On the other hand, SMA#3 includes Orçikla (southwest of Zapod and northwest of Cërnaleva), which is not mentioned in Mladenović (2001). Like the first two volumes, this one contains a wealth of material, although the analytical apparatus is modest. The one thing that could have been done in SMA#3 that would have been tremendously useful would have been to fill in the blanks (or X’s) on the 51 maps published in Mladenović (2001) which detail all the significant features for each of the 17 villages on the Kosovo side of Gora. While SMA#3 does make frequent and appropriate reference to Mladenović (2001), an appendix with those maps filled in for the Albanian side would have been useful and researcher-friendly. For example, Mladenović (2001:224) Map 18 on the treatment of velars before front vowels involves a feature noted by inhabitants of Albanian Gora themselves as differentiating villages (SMA#3, p. 26). Apparently Borje is of the “stable” type, like most of Gora, but Shishtavec is linked to one of the types to its northeast and not to the nearest villages on the Kosovo side. As it stands, the reader must hunt through SMA#3 to get the picture.

The bibliographies are very thorough and useful, but they do have a few shortcomings, errors, and lacunae. As already noted, Hendriks (1976) is an important reference for SMA#1. Also, the reference to Hill 1997 on p.9 of SMA#1 should probably be Hill 1999 in the bibliography (p.371). Univerzitet Sv. Kiril i Metodij is in Skopje, not Sofia (SMA#1 p. 372). The item listed as Kramer and Schallert (2003; p. 372) did not actually appear. Rather Kramer (2005) and Schallert (2005) each published their research separately. Also, Kramer (2002) is an additional source on Vrbnik not noted in the bibliography. For SMA#2, Svetieva (2007) is an important resource for Golo Brdo, while Mihailov (1954) is relevant for the dialects of Debarsko Pole. We can also note that after SMA#2 appeared, four volumes of Golo Brdo folklore in local dialect using Albanian orthography were published in Albania (Mazniku and Koja 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011).

For SMA#3, to the bibliography of Goran materials published by Gorans themselves we can add the works Haani (2007), Redžeplari (2005, 2006a, 2006b 2008) as well as at least one Goran web site <<http://gora8.tripod.com/id51.htm>> (accessed 9 July 2011), which has various features including stories in Goran. Although SMA#3 makes use of Mladenović's works, Mladenović (1995, 1997) are cited without the proper bibliographic information that they are parts of larger works and Mladenović (2002, 2004) could also have been cited, since they go beyond the material in Mladenović (2001).

The volumes also address the issue of identity among these various groups. For Vrbnik, we can also note the work by de Rapper (2001) and (Kramer 2000). From a linguistic point of view, the dialects of southeastern and eastern Albania have always been recognized as part of the Macedonian dialect continuum, which Bulgarian linguists and diplomats continue to claim as Bulgarian. As for the speakers themselves, those in Prespa have a clear Macedonian identity, those in Vrbnik identify most strongly regionally and religiously as *Egejci* (Aegean Macedonians) and as Christians. Before the Greek Civil War, their marital connections were with Smrdeš and Vămbel (Greek Krystalope:gé: and Moskhokhó:rion [changed in 1926]) in what became Greece after 1913. These two villages were depopulated in the wake of the Greek Civil War and eventually resettled by Aromanians. Today people in Vrbnik regard local Orthodox Christian Albanians as *naši* "ours" and consider them suitable potential marriage partners, whereas the Muslim Macedonian speakers of Golo Brdo are "Turks" and not *naši*. The Macedonian speakers of Prespa, despite being Orthodox, are ridiculed in Vrbnik as *Šopi* (Kramer 2000). From my own work I can note that Bulgarians have recruited in Vrbnik, and one man from the village now teaches in Bulgaria and denies vehemently the existence of a Macedonian language, thus following the Bulgarian party line that goes back to the nineteenth century. The villagers from Vrbnik who live in Canada have a strong Macedonian identity.

The dialects of Gora were claimed by both Serbia and Bulgaria until the end of World War Two, when, following the administrative border between Kosovo and Macedonia, they were claimed as Serbian in Yugoslavia and were ignored in Albania, where the schools are still only in Albanian. Bulgarian linguists accepted the Serbian claim, as seen in Kočev (1988), which includes all Macedonian dialects as Bulgarian but excludes Gora. Vidoeski (1984/85, 1986) argued on the basis of key phonological and morphological features that the Goran dialects are closer to neighboring Macedonian dialects than to Serbian dialects, and this argument was accepted by Brozović and Ivić (1988), who did not include Gora in their map of Serbo-Croatian dialects. Kočev (2001) also accepted these arguments by revising Bulgarian claims to include Gora, based on the Bulgarian ideology that all Macedonian dialects belong to Bulgaria(n). With the break-up of Yugoslavia, Serbian dialectologists have back-tracked somewhat. Remetić (1996:535[217]) treats the Gora dialects as Macedonian, Peco (1989/90 [1995]:420) labels them as a "special transition" (*svojevrtan prelaz*) between Macedonian and Serbian, and Mladenović (2001:542) concludes that the dialect is of a mixed West South Slavic/East South Slavic type. With regard to the speakers themselves, Ylli (2007) discusses the various names Gorans use for their language and for themselves, which can vary according to whether language, religion, polity, or none of the above is referenced: *makedonci, turci, albanci, našinci*. Based on my own field work, in Macedonia and Gora, they also use the terms *torbeš* (Macedonian speaking Muslim) and *goran*.

Moreover, Bosniak political activists also claim the Gorans, and Bosnian is now taught in Goran schools in Kosovo. Before the 1999 NATO war, some Gorans also identified as Serbs.

Taken as a group, these three descriptions are an invaluable resource for the Macedonian dialects of Albania. Despite the shortcomings noted above, they significantly enhance our understanding of both language facts and linguistic processes. They fill in and correct important gaps in the Macedonian dialectological map, provide rich troves of data—both written and recorded—and address a variety of sociolinguistic issues as well. At the same time, these volumes make clear the effect of borders and nation-state policies on language preservation and endangerment as well as identity.

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