

Families, Leagues, and Hybridity:  
 The Past and Future of Slavic and East European Languages  
 Victor A. Friedman  
 University of Chicago  
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#### INTRODUCTION

This keynote speech was so well received that I have decided to take the advice of colleagues and friends and leave it almost exactly as I delivered it. Rather than tinker with the text, I have added footnotes and references where appropriate.<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed an honor for me to give the keynote address for AATSEEL in the year 2011, which marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of our organization in 1941, three weeks after the US entered World War Two. This year also marks no fewer than nine different decadal anniversaries pertaining to former Yugoslavia, four if them in 1941. Those four are the Nazi and Bulgarian invasions, the creation of the so-called Independent State of Croatia, and the Albanian annexation of Kosovo and adjacent regions. With the Bulgarian and Albanian annexations, Albanian and Bulgarian became the official languages in those territories for the duration of the occupation, and Croatian became the language of the territories controlled by the Croatian Nazi puppet state. Fifty years ago, in 1961, *Musliman* was used for the first time as a nationality category in a Yugoslav census, thus signaling developments that would ultimately lead to a separate Bosnian standard language as well as claims that all Slavic-speaking Muslims—including those of the Sandžak, Gora, Western Macedonia, and even the Rhodopes are Bosniacs.<sup>2</sup> Another development that challenges boundaries of identity resulting from this category of *musliman* occurred in the 1994 Macedonian census, when a number of people declared *musliman* nationality but Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or (unspecified) Christian religion (*Zavod za Statistika* 50). Forty years ago, in 1971, Dalibor Brozović published his “*Deset teza o hrvatskome jeziku*” (Ten theses on the Croatian language), a kind of Croatian declaration of independence from Serbo-Croatian, Croato-Serbian,

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<sup>1</sup> The research on which this article is based was conducted over many years with support from the following grants and organizations: American Council of Learned Societies (2000-01), National Endowment for the Humanities (2001), Slavic and East European Language Resource Center at Duke University (2003), Research Center for Linguistic Typology at LaTrobe University (2004), Fulbright-Hays (2008-09), John Simon Guggenheim Foundation (2009). None of the opinions expressed herein are the responsibility of any of these organizations. All translations are my own except where noted.

<sup>2</sup> Although Muslim nationality did not correlate with any single language in former Yugoslavia, the majority were Serbo-Croatian-speakers, except in Macedonia, where they were Macedonian-speakers (Friedman 1996).

Serbian or Croatian as well as the Eastern variant of that language. In 1981 a student demonstration against the truly horrible food in the University of Prishtina dining hall (which, interestingly enough, Dalibor Brozović declared to be quite tasty [p.c. 1976]) turned into demonstrations demanding republic status for Kosovo that were perceived as a prelude to secession and were violently suppressed by the first declaration of martial law in Yugoslavia since World War Two. In 1991, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Kosova, all declared independence from Yugoslavia, and, we can mention in passing, the Soviet Union was officially dissolved.<sup>3</sup> The break-up of former Yugoslavia was followed by a decade of war, slaughter, and personal tragedy the like of which Europe had not seen since World War Two. That the dissolution of the USSR has yet to produce a change in the mode of governance in Belarus is, alas, still apparent in recent news.<sup>4</sup> The break-up of Yugoslavia also resulted in the break-up of Serbo-Croatian.<sup>5</sup> Finally, in 2001 a group of ethnic Albanian insurgents initiated a conflict in the Republic of Macedonia that ended that same year with the Ohrid Framework Agreement.<sup>6</sup> Language rights were a key factor in the demands of the insurgents.<sup>7</sup>

With so many anniversaries related to politics, war, language, and identity, it seems only appropriate at an association whose name is about teachers of Slavic

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3 The form Kosovo is a Slavic neuter denominal adjective from kos ‘blackbird’ modifying an understood polje ‘field’. In Albanian, Slavic toponyms in -o are reinterpreted as feminine nouns with the indefinite in -ë and the definite in -a, e.g. Kosovë~Kosova. Today, Kosovo is internationally recognized under the Slavic form of the toponym, but at the time of the constitution in question, the Albanian definite form was used.

4 [http://www.rferl.org/content/standoff\\_between\\_lukashenka\\_opposition\\_nears\\_third\\_day/2254886.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/standoff_between_lukashenka_opposition_nears_third_day/2254886.html) (accessed 20 January 2011).

5 Two episodes of the Yugoslav television show *Top Lista Nadrealista* (Surrealists’ Top List), which can still be seen on YouTube, provide particularly biting satire of the linguistic break-up. The episodes are *Prevodioc* ‘The Translator’ <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kkStbK5mCs>> (accessed 20 January 2011) and *Otvoreno o jeziku* ‘Openly About Language’ <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6Ia15riHRw&feature=related>> (accessed 20 January 2011). The second episode discusses six languages: *srpski, hrvatski, bosanski, hercegovački, crnski, i gorski* ‘Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Hercegovinian, Monten, and Negrin.’

6 The agreement served as the basis of amendments 4–18 of the Macedonian constitution, passed in 2001.

7 Although the original 1991 Macedonian constitution provided for language rights for languages other than Macedonian, it did so in terms of majorities and only at the local level. Amendment 5(1)—based on Article 6.5 of the Ohrid Framework Agreement—specifies that any language spoken by at least 20% of the population is official. The article specifies both national and local levels as affected, and thus in practice Albanian is official at the national level. In a number of municipalities Turkish is official, and Romani is official in the Šuto Orizari municipality north of Skopje’s center.

and East European languages to talk about some of the languages we teach. The Great Bear, which, to mix metaphors, is the elephant in any room where Big Brother is included, will be mostly peripheral to my talk, although not entirely absent. But I shall focus on Southeastern Europe, which not only epitomizes the intersection of the language family, the language league (German *Sprachbund*, henceforth sprachbund, which I treat as a loanword into English like the French *genre*), and hybridity, but is also the site of the last remaining political boundary between “East” and “West” in non-ex-Soviet Europe. This is because the term “Western Balkans” denotes those Southeast European nation-states that have yet to be admitted to the EU, and, ironically, it is the “East,” i.e. Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece, that constitutes part of that Western club sometimes referred to as the Belgian Empire.

The effect of the EU on the Balkans is not to be underestimated. In linguistics, EU-sponsored projects that conflate areal and typological linguistics attempt to construct a unified “European” linguistic area with its core at — surprise — the Benelux countries, France, Germany and northern Italy, i.e. the old EEC, the core of the current EU, and, a thousand years ago, also the Holy Roman Empire. Equally unsurprising is the peripheral position of Southeastern Europe and of the Slavic languages in this construct. While these confluences of the areal and the typological are useful for EU grant-seekers and serve present-day political ideologies, such approaches, which I have called “eurological” and which sometimes use specious numerologies and confused methodologies, prevaricate historical reality (Friedman 2008). As can be seen from the textual evidence of such innovations as future formation and infinitive replacement, the crucial formative period of the Balkan sprachbund is precisely the Ottoman period, when, as Olivera Jašar-Nasteva said, with one *teskere* (travel document) you could travel the whole peninsula and, we can add, when what is now the EU was divided into dozens of mini-states that only consolidated as the Ottoman Empire broke up.<sup>8</sup> I would also note that more recently, and in contrast to assertions by some authors, the importance of the Balkan dialects of Judezmo, Romani, and Turkish—and even Armenian—has been increasingly recognized (Friedman 2006, Adamou).

In a recent article on the question of defining the notion of sprachbund, Stolz proposed eliminating the term altogether, since it cannot be neatly delineated in the same way as a language family. I shall return to such “let’s throw out the baby” approaches to our field in other contexts below, but here we can say that an “all or nothing” methodology—in addition to missing Trubezkoy’s original point that the sprachbund is fundamentally different from a linguistic family—fails to take into account the basic historical fact that, like the political boundaries and institutions that sometimes help bring sprachbunds into

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<sup>8</sup> The literature on the Balkan sprachbund is vast. For discussion see Friedman (2006, 2011).

being, the “boundaries” of a sprachbund are not immutable essences but rather artifacts of on-going multilingual processes, in Hamp’s (1989) words, “a spectrum of differential bindings” rather than “compact borders.” It is also important for us to keep in mind that when Trubetskoy first proposed the term, it was at a time when the *sprachfamilie* was widely considered the only legitimate unit of historical linguistics, while resemblances that resulted from the diffusion of contact-induced changes were described in terms such as those used by Schleicher (143) in 1850 (my translation): “It is a noteworthy phenomenon that along the lower Danube and further to the southwest, a group of propinquitous languages has coalesced which, being of different lines of descent, agree only in the fact that they are the most corrupt (*die verdorbensten*) in their families. These ill-bred sons (*missrathenen Söhne*) are Walachian in Romance, Bulgarian in Slavic, and Albanian in the Greek family.” What Trubetskoy was trying to do in his original Proposition #16 at the First International Congress of Linguists was conceptualize and theorize a way of talking about languages that participate in shared processes of contact-induced convergence. Trubetskoy’s key example in his original formulation was what he called Bulgarian (in modern terms Balkan Slavic), which he described as simultaneously a member of the Slavic language family (*Sprachfamilie*) and of the Balkan sprachbund. On the one hand, this central position of Balkan Slavic in the history of the study of language contact, and, on the other hand, the intellectual and political dominance of the official language of the Czarist Empire in the field of Slavic linguistics, has also led to a certain amount of skewing in the conceptualization of language change in the Slavic language family.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, for example, much is made of the loss of nominal declension in Balkan Slavic as making those languages/dialects somehow less “proto-typically” or “typologically” Slavic,<sup>10</sup> but very little attention is paid to the devastation of the Slavic verbal system in that northeasternmost Slavic language which too frequently dominates and defines the notion of “Slavic.” That language not only lost all the synthetic past tenses but didn’t even manage to retain the copula in the perfect, much less the analytically conjugated pluperfect and conditional. My point here is that the simplification of the nominal inflectional system is taken as a clear example of contact-induced change in Balkan Slavic, but the simplification of the verbal system in Northeast Slavic is routinely presented as if it were an internal (dare we say “natural”?) process. And yet, if we look at the other Balkan languages, we see considerably more conservatism with regard to case

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<sup>9</sup> And indeed in the earliest days of Balkan linguistics Slavic-speakers such as Kopitar, Miklosich, and Seliščev played a dominant role in creating the field.

<sup>10</sup> The conflation of the historical linguistic term *Slavic* with the achronic concept *typological* is already problematic (cf. Hamp 1977).

distinctions (e.g. Balkan Romance is the only modern Romance group with substantival declension), while in Northeast Slavic linguistic territory very little attention is paid to what must have been a vibrant multilingual situation in the medieval period, when the inherited Common Slavic verbal system collapsed. Perhaps precisely because a Slavic-speaking Empire established its hegemony in the northeast in the early modern period and aggressively spread its central dialects, while the Ottoman Empire remained a hotbed of multilingualism, the perception of Balkan Slavic as somehow aberrant from an ideal Slavic “type” (itself a problematic concept) has been easy to propagate. Aronson (2006), however, has gone so far as to suggest that in fact northeasternmost Slavic is aberrant in terms of a “Slavic” typological profile. And indeed there are many features, probably of diffusional origin, that can be cited to support this point.<sup>11</sup>

What we have today in the Balkans is continued contact and mutual influence among local languages at local levels. This is especially true in the Republic of Macedonia, which is both smaller than and characterized by more widespread and complex multilingualism than its neighbors. The fact that more people in the Balkans now know English rather than a neighboring language certainly adds a new dimension to the investigation of the Balkan sprachbund, and we can even say that English is the Turkish of the 21st century, supplying a variety of lexical items and even calques, such as the Macedonian *imajte dobra večer* ‘Have a good evening’. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the homogenizing power of the nation-state has eliminated Balkan multilingualism in large swaths of territory where local language contact was the norm in the past, enough such locales of contact continue to function that there is still plenty of research to be done. The same can be said of the rest of the territory where Slavic languages are spoken. In this regard it is worth noting that at a recent Turcological conference in southern or EU Cyprus, it was the opening up of Turcology to contact studies that was clearly identified as the most exciting and interesting direction in a field that had been dominated by *Fundamenta Turcologica* for many decades.<sup>12</sup> We can hope that a greater openness to contact linguistics will eventually reach the northeastern margins of Slavic as well. It is certainly an important field of investigation in Ukraine. To this I would only add that the development of urban sociolinguistics provides a valuable addition to traditional rural dialectology in studying language contact processes.

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<sup>11</sup> This would be the place for me to list each and every one of them for you (cf. the Alamo scene in “Pee-Wee’s Big Adventure”). That task, however, is for others. See Veenker and also Dombrowski.

<sup>12</sup> This comment was made by Turcologist Barbara Flemming. It is worth noting that the University of Cyprus, located in the Greek-dominated, EU part of the island, has one of the strongest Turcological departments in Europe,

The need for dialectology, like the need for documenting endangered languages in general, is acute in many parts of the world, but nowhere in Southeastern Europe is it more acute than in that first of the eastern Balkan nation-states to join the EU, Greece. In Athens on 2 June 2009, I participated in the promotion of the first Modern Macedonian - Modern Greek dictionary to be published in Greece. I was close to the end of my speech and had just said: "On the one hand, we can note that dialects such as those of Florina and Edhessa in Greece are so close to those of neighboring Bitola and Gevgelija, respectively, in neighboring Macedonia that calling them separate languages does not have a basis in the linguistic data. On the other hand, if we accept the argument that the Macedonian dialects of Greece are a separate language or separate languages, then their documentation is all the more urgent, since they are on the very brink of extinction." Before I could get to my next sentence: "Either way, it is to be hoped that the Greek government will permit linguists to document these dialects before they disappear without the police harassment that, unfortunately, continues to instill fear in speakers and obstruct researchers."—about a dozen thugs dressed in black and wearing the kind of combat helmets that riot police wear burst into the room blocking the exits and screaming threats and obscenities. One of them took a swing at my head with a large heavy object. They vandalized the podium, and, having thoroughly terrorized the audience, they left.<sup>13</sup> They were members of *Hrisi Avgi* 'Golden Dawn' a far right wing political party that currently has a seat on the Athens City Council. This was front page news in Macedonia, ignored in Greece, and no attempt was made to bring the perpetrators to any semblance of justice. Such, then, is the day-to-day climate for multilingualism in the so-called Cradle of Democracy: Tantrums and violence.

Unfortunately, some American scholars are complicit in this kind of intellectual terrorism—and I do not use the term lightly. The Modern Greek Studies Association, an organization whose litserv is hosted by the University of California at Irvine, distributed an ugly and hysterical call encouraging readers to pressure the University of Utah into canceling the Seventh Macedonian-North American Conference on Macedonian Studies that was held at the University of Utah in November, 2009. Although the call did not originate with the MGSA, its distribution by them gave academic support to the barrage of faxes, emails, letters, and phone calls that inundated the offices of the Provost and President at Utah demanding that the conference be cancelled. Fortunately, the University stood its ground on principles of academic freedom, and they also provided security to prevent a recurrence of the June incident. Greeks came all the way

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<sup>13</sup> The video can be seen at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L40kQfnFuik&feature=related>> (accessed 20 January 2011). A different version with Macedonian subtitles (but a less immediate angle) can be seen at <[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_QXj4fXgEmw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QXj4fXgEmw)> (accessed 20 January 2011).

from New Hampshire to disrupt the meeting but were, fortunately, prevented from doing so. Nonetheless, the entire incident is illustrative of the extent to which American Modern Greek Studies has been compromised.<sup>14</sup>

Greece's irrational fear of its minorities has even penetrated the world of American men's magazines. The November 2006 issue of *Maxim* featured a photo spread of international "Miss Maxim"s each a scantily clad and provocatively posed representative of a different country with a putative quotation from the model and a "hometown fact" about the country such as the difference between Holland and Netherlands, the number of bulls killed annually in bullfights in Spain, and the number of tons of radioactive dust released in the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. The hometown fact for "Miss Maxim Greece" was the following: "According to the Greek government there are no ethnic divisions in Greece" (p. 176).<sup>15</sup>

This intolerance is especially unfortunate for Slavists, East Europeanists, and Balkanists, since Greece is very much a part of our purview in terms of the languages, folklore, and even literature of the region. It is, after all, the modern Slavic and Albanian oral epics that gave birth to the Parry-Lord hypothesis (Lord 1960) concerning Homer, and Kazantzakis' *Zorba the Greek* concludes with a letter written from Skopje.<sup>16</sup> Greek figures as an important factor in Balkan linguistic ecology as does Macedonian, Albanian, Aromanian, etc. Greeks are happy to claim credit for Cyril and Methodius as Byzantine, although it appears that it was the Byzantines who destroyed the fruits of their work in the Balkans. According to Fine (220), citing Mošin (54-69), the utter paucity of Slavic-language sources prior to 1180 in the regions controlled by Byzantium can quite reasonably be attributed to a deliberate destruction of Slavic-language books and manuscripts. The evidence that it was Byzantines and not Ottomans that erased the evidence is the fact that Greek manuscripts dating back to the ninth and tenth centuries have been preserved in Ohrid, and several hundred manuscripts from the second Bulgarian Empire have been preserved in Bulgaria. If the Turks and not the Greeks had been responsible, then one would expect no such texts to have survived. In other words, the policy of Greek opposition to literacy in Slavic in the Balkans has a long history.

Greek opposition to multilingualism in the modern period is illustrated in both literacy and folklore. The literate illustration is not literature, but is connected with literacy and its promulgation. In 1793/1794 (and/or 1802), an

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<sup>14</sup> The Greek State has provided material support to the MGSA. The member of the Association who informed me of this fact probably prefers not to be cited by name.

<sup>15</sup> Miss Greece's personal quotation was "I think the best part of my body is my lips."

<sup>16</sup> See *Nova Makedonija* (XX.XX.XXXX:XX - these files are at home, I forgot to make the note, and will note be able to access them until the end of March, so if that is too late to add a footnote, better to just delete.)

Aromanian named Hadži Daniil of Moskopole (modern Voskopojë in Albania) published a quadrilingual conversation manual in what he called *Romañka* [Roman], *Vláhika* [Walachian], *Voulgárika* [Bulgarian], and *Alvanítika*— [Albanian] in modern terms Greek, Aromanian, Macedonian, and Albanian.<sup>17</sup> The purpose of the manual however, was to eliminate multilingualism. Daniil was quite explicit about the Hellenizing mission of his project, as can be seen from the introductory verses of his alphabetic poem which I give here in Wace and Thompson’s (6) excellent translation:

Albanians, Bulgars, Vlachs and all who now do speak  
An alien tongue, rejoice, prepare to make you Greek.  
Change your barbaric tongue, your customs rude forego,  
So that as bygone myths your children may them know.<sup>18</sup>

The sentiment is the opposite of that expressed by the Macedonian activist Gjorgji Pulevski (3) in his polyglot Greek-Macedonian-Albanian-Turkish conversation manual, where he wrote that knowledge of many languages is necessary for everyone from the highest to the lowest. The folk expression in Macedonian is *jazici se bogatstvo* ‘languages are wealth’, and popular sayings expressing this sentiment are to be found in every Balkan language **except** Greek, where after considerable research I have determined that no such proverb exists.<sup>19</sup> And so, unfortunately, although Greece has the same multilingual complexity as the Republic of Macedonia—Slavic, Romance, Albanic, Indic, Turkish, Armenian (as well as Greek) all being spoken in both places—both folk and political ideology in Greece refuse to value it.

I realize I have spent lot of time on Greece. The Caucasus is much more interesting for the questions it raises about Europe versus Asia, Christianity versus

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<sup>17</sup> The exact date is a bit problematic, see Kristophson (8–9) for discussion and a complete text of the lexicon.

<sup>18</sup> Ἀλβανοὶ, Βλάχοι, Βούλγαροι, Ἀλλόγλωσσοι χαρήτε,  
Κ’έτοιμασθήτε ὅλοι σας Ῥωμαῖοι νὰ γενήτε.  
Βαρβαρικὴν ἀφήνοντες γλώσσαν, φωνὴν καὶ ἦθη,  
Ὅπου στοὺς Ἀπογόνους σας νὰ φαίνονται σὰν μῦθοι.

<sup>19</sup> I am especially fond of the Turkish *bir lisan—bir insan, iki lisan—iki insan* ‘one language [is worth] one person, two languages [are worth] two people, which is also used in Judezmo. Even Aulus Gellius (Noctes Atticae, 17.17.1) has an equivalent in Latin. Brian Joseph (p.c., 2010) encountered such an expression in Greek in a conversation with the mayor of a Hellenophone village in southern Albania, but other Hellenophone Albanians rejected the expression as imported from the Soviet Union. Although some recent scholarship has emphasized that Ancient Greeks did learn other languages (and apparently prided themselves on their Greek accent, e.g. in Latin [Adams 17]), the fact remains that Modern Greek folklore and policy either ignore or are directed against the knowledge of the other languages spoken on the territory of the Former Ottoman Provinces of Greece.

Islam versus geography versus politics as defining factors,<sup>20</sup> and also in terms of linguistic diversity. Consider the southern part of the Republic of Daghestan, where there are 34 languages in a region that is half the size of Kansas. But the inclusion of the Caucasus in our purview is not a problem. Neither, for that matter, is Siberia. The Czarist/Soviet Empire has seen to that if nothing else. But in the Balkans, discourses of orientalism and discourses of Hellenism (and now, also, of eurology and numerology) erase facts of multilingualism and thus represent genuine challenges to progress in our fields.

The last time a linguist was honored by AATSEEL with the outstanding contributions to scholarship award, he wrote in the published version of his address: "...what's in a name is what we choose to put in it" (Schenker 3). Alas, what one historian calls "Greece's amok politics toward Macedonia" (see Friedman 1998 51) has shown us that what's in a name can be rather what one power bullies others into doing. I had to smile, albeit not happily, at the recent media flap over moving the Gulf of Arabia from the west side of the peninsula (where it is also known as the Red Sea) to the east (also known as the Persian Gulf).<sup>21</sup> The world is actually full of such contested names, from the part of southern Albania called Çamëri, that Greeks insist is Northern Epirus, to the Malay-speakers of southern Thailand that the Thai government calls Muslim Thais (Smalley 322). Interestingly enough, the Greek government does something similar to its Turkish-speaking citizens, who are officially Muslim Greeks and whose language in Greece is called *Mousoulmaniká Thrákēs*, i.e. "Muslimish of Thrace" (*Ellēnikē dialektologia* 5[1996-1998]).

Schenker (10) also suggested dropping the designation "East European" from the name of our organization after what he called "a proper debate." Fortunately, no one seems to have taken him up on this retrograde suggestion. At a time when the membership of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies voted to become the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, I would argue that we at AATSEEL have always been ahead of the curve, or, if you prefer, have moved to the forefront by staying in one place while others run back and forth. It is ironic that Schenker suggests that such narrowing would somehow be good for the organization, rather like the suggestion of a scholar whose Ph.D. dissertation deals with a North Slavic literature who opined that the only way to save the study of South Slavic and Balkan literature was to eliminate everything non-Slavic as well as Bosnian,

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<sup>20</sup> A striking example of such indetermination is to be found in *Webster's Geographical Dictionary* (347, 74), where the border between Europe and Asia that falls between the Black and Caspian Seas is defined as the Caucasian Ridge under the entry for Europe, but as the Turco-Iranian political border under the entry for Asia.

<sup>21</sup> <[http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog\\_thelookout/20101214/us\\_yblog\\_thelookout/u-s-military-stokes-iranian-anger-by-calling-persian-gulf-arabian-gulf](http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog_thelookout/20101214/us_yblog_thelookout/u-s-military-stokes-iranian-anger-by-calling-persian-gulf-arabian-gulf)> (accessed 11 February 2011)

Macedonian, Bulgarian and most of Serbian.<sup>22</sup> I am reminded of the beginning of Chapter Three in Aleko Konstantinov's classic Bulgarian novel, *Bai Ganyo*, now available in a well-reviewed English translation:<sup>23</sup>

“It also happened in Vienna. I was sitting in the café one morning, at Mendel's. I had ordered a cup of tea and had just started looking through some Bulgarian newspapers. I was deeply engrossed in an extremely interesting article in which the author was discussing ways the constitution could be tinkered with—well, actually dismantled—and yet somehow remain intact” (Konstantinov 24).

Suggestions that we put on blinders or otherwise narrow our focus and erase important parts of our field are comparable to Stambolov's attempts to dismantle Bulgaria's constitution, which was what Aleko was criticizing, or to Daniil's exhortation to give up diversity for some imagined Hellenistic ideal.

And so, I would argue, far from needing to close off, narrow, or segregate our field or parts of it, we should instead embrace the differences that make both life and academe more interesting. I would also note the value of margins, which in their own ways can be central. It was, after all, the Balkans that initiated our understanding of diffusion across languages as a source of change, and in Macedonia—everybody's Balkan margin of conflicting claims (Serbia claims the church [and its properties], Bulgaria claims the language [and its speakers], there are anxieties about Albania wanting the land [they had the western part 1941-44], and Greece wants to make it disappear)—those changes continue to occur. Moreover, on the northeastern margins of Early Slavic, ancient letters written on birch bark have reshaped our understanding of both genealogical and areal linguistic history both for that region and for Slavic in general. We can also cite here the winner of this year's AATSEEL award in Slavic Linguistics, J. Gvozdanović's book on Slavic-Celtic contact (see also Gołab). The recent discovery and publication of a gospel written in Old Udi (Gippert et al.)—Udi being a Daghestanian language that survived in only two villages in the mountains of Azerbaijan but has now been identified as the lingua franca of an early medieval empire that included much of trans-Caucasia—shows that there are still many fields of knowledge in our region left to be explored. Perhaps one day the Thracian translation of the Gospel implied in the homilies of John Chrysostom will also be found, thus finally giving us a complete sentence in one of the ancient Balkan languages other than Greek or Eastern Latin. And in the meantime, the

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<sup>22</sup> This unfortunate opinion was published in the newsletter of the organization formerly known as AAASS (January 1998, pp. 7-8).

<sup>23</sup> See <<http://bulstack.com/2010/11/23/bai-ganyo-incredible-tales-of-a-modern-bulgarian/>> (accessed 11 January 2011).

ecology of languages in contact from Skopje to Odessa and beyond can also continue to engage our interest.

My proposal therefore is that we not change our name, that we not try to erase a part of our literary heritage, but rather, on the contrary, that we increase our contacts beyond the borders of our languages and disciplines both spatially and temporally. Recall that it was as classicists that Parry and Lord started out, and, as I observed earlier, it was the South Slavic and Albanian singers of tales that illuminated the origins of Homeric epic. Note also that some of those singers sang in both languages (Kolsti). The South Slavic epics recorded in the Milman Parry collection can be accessed online, and a selection of the Albanian epics collected by Albert Lord, with translations, are due to appear under the general editorship of Nicola Scaldaferi and published by the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature (Distributed by Harvard UP), after which those texts, too, will be made available via the website.<sup>24</sup> This is a time of exciting changes, and we can make the most of them by reaching out rather than by closing off or shutting down. To move forward we need not discard the knowledge we have worked so hard to achieve, but at the same time we should eschew fixed agendas, be they national or supranational, parochial or universalizing. Our best course of action is to acknowledge boundaries—and then cross them!

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<sup>24</sup> Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature On-Line, <<http://chs119.chs.harvard.edu/mpc/>>

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