Multilingualism in the Central Balkans in late Ottoman times

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Until the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, the region of Macedonia, part of the Ottoman Empire, was remarkably multiethnic and multilingual. Because Macedonia was partitioned and annexed by various nation states as late as 1913, the kind of complex multilingualism that had given birth to the famous Balkan sprachbund (linguistic area) survived there longer than in other regions of the Balkans. Therefore, we have more detailed descriptions of this multilingualism by scholars and travelers than in other regions. This paper concentrates on the linguistic situation in the Central Balkan area around Lakes Ohrid and Prespa and also in Pelagonia, with the city of Bitola as its center – areas where the linguistic situation reported in late Ottoman times was particularly complex. Pieces of historical information about multilingualism will be put into the context of the general linguistic situation in the Empire. In addition, the use of parallel columns in printed books, manuscripts, and private notebooks will be discussed as an iconic expression of the sociolinguistic situation of the time.

1 Introduction

The Balkan linguistic area naturally has a center and a periphery. Although these are difficult to define in absolute terms, it can be seen that in the Central Balkans around Lakes Ohrid and Prespa, the co-territorial dialects of different languages possess the greatest number of convergent features (Lindstedt 2000, 232–234, forthcoming). Asenova (2002, 17) draws the outer boundaries of the “strongest concentration” of linguistic Balkanisms approximately along the valleys of the rivers Shkumbin, Vjosa, and Vardar/Axios, which leaves Ohrid and Prespa in the center of the area, although Asenova does not mention these lakes.
The western stretch of the famous Roman military road Via Egnatia ran along the Shkumbin valley, passing through the present-day cities of Struga and Ohrid, and continuing to the plain of Pelagonia, where Monastir (the present-day Bitola) was an important city in the late Ottoman Empire, becoming the administrative center of a vilayet (province) in the 1870s. The Via Egnatia had been a route for the partial Romanization and Romancization of the Balkans, a channel for East-West contacts in Byzantine times, and also a route for the Crusaders. It still had at least regional significance until the Balkan Wars, and was called by Aromanian caravaners and merchants calea mare ‘the great road’. Lory (2011, 32–39) discusses the significance of the Via Egnatia, especially for the development of Bitola, although he warns that its influence has been exaggerated by some historians.

The linguistic convergence that formed the Balkan linguistic area may have begun in Byzantine times; Joseph (2013, 619) places its beginning around the year 1000 CE. But the five centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans must have been the most important period for the rise of the sprachbund (Lindstedt 2000, 238–241). As characterized by Todorova (1997, 174), the Pax Ottomana (also called Pax Ottomanica) meant “the abolishment of state and feudal frontiers, which facilitated or enhanced population movements and the interpenetration of different groups within a vast territory.”

It was an important historical coincidence that Albania and Macedonia, in which this center of the linguistic area was located, remained part of the Ottoman Empire longer than the adjacent regions of the Balkans. This “European Turkey,” as it was called, was described by several scholars and travelers from various countries in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, and local multilingualism is often mentioned in these reports. Because the area was claimed by different national states (which finally led to the Balkan Wars), several observers were particularly interested in the ethnic composition of the population, although their linguistic observations were often quite superficial. Additional information can be gathered from earlier travel reports, such as the Seyâhatnâme by the famous 17th-century Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi (see Evliya Çelebi 2000).

As rightly emphasized by Joseph (2013, 628–629), the beginning of convergent linguistic features, even those with wide distribution, should be sought in actual speaker-to-speaker contacts in definite local settings. This is why understanding the sociolinguistic situation in the Central Balkans during Ottoman times will help us to understand the rise of the Balkan sprachbund.
And even now, more than one hundred years after the Balkan Wars, some local linguistic situations in this area bear witness to the multilingualism of the past. Research into the mutual influence of Aromanian and Macedonian, for instance, as carried out by Golab (1997) and Marković (2007), clearly shows how Balkan linguistic convergence functions on the local level. And it was against this background that the Helsinki Area & Language Studies field trip in 2015, which resulted in this volume, was directed to the study of bilingual speakers in the Central Balkans. However, the aim of the present paper is not to report on the actual results of the field trip, as do other papers in this volume, but to give an overview of the earlier historical situation in the region.

2 The prestige languages

The state and administrative language of the Ottoman Empire was Ottoman Turkish, which was not the Turkish of the ordinary people. Ottoman Turkish was the language of learning and poetry for most of the Ottoman intellectuals. It showed a strong Persian influence, as well as Arabic influence by way of the Persian tongue (Tornow 2014, 515). Hanioğlu (2008, 35) writes: “Ottoman Turkish was unintelligible to an uneducated native speaker of Turkish. […] Those who used the Ottoman language were not necessarily Turks. Rather, they constituted the educated upper classes of a variety of Ottoman groups.”

In the Balkans, especially among the Christians, the Greek language had the highest prestige. Greek was also used at times by the Sublime Porte (the Ottoman central government) in its diplomatic correspondence (Horrocks 1997, 322–333). The Greek language was called “Romaic” (ρωμαϊκα), and the self-designation of its speakers, native and others, was “Roman” (Ρωμαίος or Ρωμιός); these words did not have an ethnic meaning, but rather religious, “Orthodox Christian,” and social, “upper class,” connotations (Detrez 2015, 62–79; Lindstedt 2012). The Greeks’ ancient self-designation “Hellene” (Ἑλληνας) and its equivalents in other languages, such as the Bulgarian grăk, began to be re-used more widely as ethnic designations only with the rise of modern nationalism (Kitromilides 2007, III: 8–10; Detrez 2015, 62–79, 232–233).

Both Ottoman Turkish and the Greek of the educated “Romans” were, therefore, not ethnic languages, but socially and religiously marked languages, associated with the privileged Muslim population and with the self-governing confessional community of all Orthodox Christians (Millet-i Rûm), respectively. But, in addition, part of the Orthodox Christian
community cherished the tradition of Church Slavonic as a written language of liturgical and other religious texts. During most of the Ottoman period, Greek and Church Slavonic both had niches of their own in the Orthodox community. It was only with the rise of first Greek, then Bulgarian, and finally Macedonian national movements in the course of the late 18th and the 19th centuries that Greek and Church Slavonic became rivals as liturgical languages among the Slavic population of the Balkans. After the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870, the Macedonian Slavs were divided into “Patriarchists,” who wanted to stay under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople, and “Exarchists,” who preferred the new Slavic Church organization. Even members of the same family could assume different identities – Greek, Bulgarian, or Ottoman (cf. Mackridge 2012 on the Vogoridis family) – as often happens in different parts of the world when new national identities are constructed.

This system of prestige languages was further complicated by the fact that Turkish, Greek, and Slavic language situations were each diglossic or diglossic with a middle compromise variety. Between the High variety fasih türkçe ‘correct Turkish’ and the Low variety kaba türkçe ‘vulgar Turkish’ there was a variety called orta türkçe ‘middle Turkish’ used for business purposes among the educated; in the latter half of the 19th century it was codified and became the variety most used until the revolution of the Young Turks in 1908 (Tornow 2014, 516).

In Greek, the original High variety was the archaic Koine (‘common [language]’), which had been the ideal in Byzantine times; it was markedly different from the spoken Low variety, called Demotic (‘popular’) Greek. In the written Greek of the Ottoman period, it was usual to combine archaizing morphology with relatively contemporary syntactic patterns, which constituted a kind of middle style (Horrocks 1997, 322–326). The middle style was gradually codified in the 18th and 19th centuries as a variety that came to be known as katharévousa, the ‘purifying’ language (as opposed to the “uncorrected” Demotic Greek; Horrocks 1997, 344–350; Tornow 2014, 516). Thus, both in Turkish and Greek, we can observe a shift whereby what was originally a middle style between the High and Low varieties became a new High variety, which was explicitly codified and clearly opposed to the vernacular.

As for the Balkan Slavic (Bulgarian and Macedonian) language community, Church Slavonic was clearly different from the actual spoken varieties. Historically, it was mainly based on the Slavic dialects of
Macedonia and Bulgaria in the 9th century, but as part of the Balkan linguistic area, Balkan Slavic had changed a great deal after those times. The case inflection, non-finite verb forms, and synthetic comparatives of Church Slavonic were completely foreign to the Balkan Slavic dialects in the 18th and 19th centuries, as was the lack of a definite article in it. Moreover, the prestige of the Russian variety (“recension”) of Church Slavonic gradually made it the preferred variety even among the Balkan Slavs, although the earlier Bulgarian and Serbian varieties had been somewhat closer to the local vernaculars.

If Church Slavonic was the High variety for the Balkan Slavs, a written Low variety first came into use at the end of the 16th century with the so-called Damascenes (damaskini). This was a manuscript tradition consisting of vernacular Macedonian and Bulgarian translations of vernacular Greek religious and didactic stories, the first of which had been written by the Greek clergyman Damaskinos Stouditis (d. 1577; for the significance of the Damascenes, see Gyllin 1991). However, in Southern Macedonia, as well as in the Central Balkan area discussed in this article, the Slavs gradually drifted out of this diglossic situation, because the Cyrillic script, which had united the Church Slavonic and Damascene traditions, fell into disuse. As reported by an anonymous correspondent from Thessaloniki in Caregradskij vestnik, March 1860 (Anonymous 1860):

Священницы-те не знаятъ Гречески а Болгарски съ гречески слова пишатъ, колко-то за другїй народь онъ въ простота глубока ся находи и нито съ гречески слова Болгарски да пиши знае. Но бакали-те и други все съ гречески слова Болгарски думи пишать.1

This southern Macedonian situation is reflected in the manuscript Gospel translations written in the local Slavic vernacular using Greek letters. The oldest such manuscript to be preserved is the Konikovo Gospel, which dates from the end of the 18th or the beginning of the 19th century (Lindstedt, Spasov, & Nuorluoto, eds. 2008); for other significant Macedonian texts in Greek letters, see the lists in Wahlström (2009, 132–133) and Spasov (2008, 412–413). This tradition was discontinued when all important Macedonian authors gradually opted for Cyrillic during the 19th century, first as part of the Bulgarian national movement and then gradually, at least beginning with

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1 “The priests do not know Greek, but write Bulgarian with Greek letters, and as regards other people, they live in profound ignorance and cannot write Bulgarian, even with Greek letters. At the grocer’s and other places, Bulgarian words are written with Greek letters.”
Gjorgija Pulevski (1875), as part of the emergent Macedonian national movement.

There was also an attempt to create a kind of middle variety of Balkan Slavic. It was represented by the so-called Slavonic-Bulgarian school, whose principles were codified in the three grammars by Neofit Bozveli and Emanuil Vaskidovič, Neofit Rilski, and Hristaki Pavlovič, all published in 1835–1836 (Vălčev 2008, 77–179). However, Slavonic-Bulgarian remained a transient phenomenon of one generation of grammarians and never acquired the significance of orta türkçe or katharévousa. Bulgarian and Macedonian authors soon chose to use the vernacular as the main orientation of their work.

3 The vernaculars

If the system of prestige languages in the Ottoman Balkans was complicated, with Turkish, Greek, and Slavic all in diglossic (and partly triglossic) situations, the system of vernaculars was even richer and more complex. In 1911, an official appeal to all of the inhabitants of the Empire was published in nine languages: Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Ladino, Serbian, Syriac Aramaic (in two scripts), and French (Hanioğlu 2008, 33). These by no means included all the languages of the Empire. In Macedonia alone, Friedman (2015, 133) counts a dozen languages as being spoken there before the Balkan Wars: Macedonian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Greek, Aromanian, Meglenoromanian, Turkish, Judezmo (Ladino), Romani, Armenian, and Circassian.

Pieces of information about how this multilingual world functioned in actual practice can be gathered from travelers’ reports. The famous Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi writes about the city of Ohrid in 1670: “Language. All the people speak Bulgarian (Bulgarca) and Greek (Urumca). They do not know Albanian (Arnavudca), since this is Rumelia (Rūm) not Albania (Arnavudistān). But they do speak elegant Turkish, and there are some very urbane and witty gentlemen” (Evliya Çelebi 2000, 216–217; transl. by the book’s editors). At least this account testifies to the widespread knowledge of Slavic, Greek, and Turkish in the city at that time. Albanian, today an important minority language in Ohrid, is explicitly mentioned as not being spoken there in 1670; however, this should perhaps not be taken in absolute terms, for Evliya Çelebi’s report mostly describes Albania, and in Ohrid he perhaps wanted to emphasize how it differed from his other travel destinations.
More detailed observations of the linguistic situation can be found in 19th-century travel reports. A valuable summary of these can be found in Bernard Lory’s great history of the city of Bitola (Monastir) from 1800 to 1918, collected in the chapter “Polyglossie” (Lory 2011, 712–717). A usual theme in foreigners’ reports of Bitola is the admiration of the multilingualism of its citizens, including the children. Thus, the Austrian consul Friedrich Westermayer reported to Vienna that even six-year-olds could speak Vlach (Aromanian), Bulgarian (Macedonian), Greek, Turkish, and Albanian equally well (op. cit., 712). Of course, it is easy to see some exaggeration in this, and Westermayer could hardly judge how well the children really spoke all these languages, but multilingual children are also mentioned by British and French travelers (op. cit., 712–713). Other travelers mention a quadrilingual shoemaker, a trilingual cart driver, and a quadrilingual Exarchist priest (op. cit., 713). Several travelers single out the Aromanians for their knowledge of several languages (ibid.); this is also confirmed by Gustav Weigand’s more detailed observations from the 1890s (see below).

The Swedish Slavist and travel writer Alfred Jensen visited the Ohrid region just before the Balkan wars and describes it in the chapter “Den stilla sjön” (“The Silent Lake”) in his book *Kors och halfmåne* (“The Cross and the Crescent,” Jensen 1911). Jensen does not offer many comments on the linguistic situation, as he was more interested in the religious and political tensions in Macedonia, but the theme of the multilingual local professional reappears (Jensen 1911, 120–121):

> För vår personliga säkerhet sörjde den ryske konsulatkavazen, albanesen Jahja […]
> Det var en ståtlig 75 åring med gråblå falkögon, väldiga hvita knävelborrar och en ömnäsa, rodnande af solglöd och vin […]
> Jag afundades den gode Jahja hans språkkunskaper, ty utom bulgariska och ryska talade han ogeneradt turkiska, grekiska och albanesiska.²

The order in which Jensen mentions the languages may not seem very logical; after all, Albanian was probably Jahja’s mother tongue. But Bulgarian and Russian were probably the languages Jensen used most during this part of his trip; Turkish was the language of the state administration and the privileged Ottomans, while Greek, we may assume, was used as an interethnic language among the Christians.

² “Our personal safety was taken care of by the kavaz [bodyguard] of the Russian consulate, the Albanian Jahja […] He was a handsome 75-year-old man with gray-blue falcon eyes, an enormous white moustache and an eagle nose [a Roman nose], red from sun and wine. […] I envied the amiable Jahja for his knowledge of languages, for besides Bulgarian and Russian he spoke Turkish, Greek, and Albanian without difficulty.”
According to Lory (2011, 713–714), the Turks in Bitola were reported by foreign travelers to be more monolingual, expecting other groups to understand their language. But it seems that the most important interethnic language among the Christians was Greek. On the other hand, “Bulgarian” (the Macedonian vernacular) was also mentioned in this role; in 1889, a French traveler wrote that “la langue bulgare est celle du marché.” Lory (2011, 715) assumes that the local Slavic dialect was the language of the Bitola market because the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside were predominantly Slavs, but this does mean that Slavic was also used as the main language of day-to-day business inside the city, and his assumption seems plausible. Lory’s (2011, 717) general conclusion runs as follows:

En l’absence d’enquêtes linguistiques véritables, nous ne pouvons qu’esquisser un tableau assez général, sur la base d’indications sporadiques. Il nous semble que l’on doive surtout opposer le citadin polyglotte (toutes communautés confondues) au paysan slave plus souvent unilingue.\(^3\)

However, this difference should not be exaggerated. In Gustav Weigand’s (1895) linguistic map, the majority of the countryside around Bitola is indeed shown as mostly “Bulgarian” speaking, but there is a compact Aromanian area in the west, quite close to the city, and several partly Albanian and Turkish areas are also shown. The general model in this part of the Balkans was that especially the transhumant shepherds were Aromanians and Albanians. Kănčov’s (1970, 536–542) population statistics for Macedonia from the end of the 19th century show “Bulgarians” numbering 10,000 (27 %) among the 37,000 citizens of Bitola, and 91,257 (60 %) among the 151,063 inhabitants of the 266 towns and villages of the whole Bitola kaza (administrative district). This is a significant difference in percentages, but hardly sufficient to contrast the “multilingual” city with the “monolingual” countryside in absolute terms; if anything, Kănčov was biased in exaggerating the number of “Bulgarians.” The 22,995 Aromanians (vlasi) were, according to Kănčov, the second largest ethnic group in the kaza.

The Balkan cities of the late Ottoman period often did not possess a clear ethnic majority of over 50 percent. In addition to the 27 percent of “Bulgarians” in Bitola in Kănčov’s statistics quoted above, Turks made up 28 percent; Aromanians, 19 percent; Jews (probably Ladino-speaking),

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\(^3\) “Lacking genuine linguistic investigations, we can only sketch a fairly general picture based on sporadic indications. It seems to us that a principal distinction has to be drawn between the multilingual city (taking all its communities together) and the Slavic countryside, which was mainly monolingual.”
15 percent; Roma, 5 percent; Albanians, 4 percent; and other groups, 1 percent. In reality, there were no reliable ethnic or linguistic statistics because the Ottoman censuses were based only on religion. Lory (2011, 85–119) gives an excellent overview of the different sources for the population statistics of Bitola, but he has not been able to access the Ottoman statistics directly. Kâncov, in his book, originally published in 1900, did use Ottoman statistics, but he probably exaggerated the number of “Bulgarians” among the Christian population (see Hristov 1970 on Kâncov’s life and work).

Interestingly, a German encyclopedia from the beginning of the 20th century, quoted by Tornow (2014, 512), states that there were approximately 35 percent Albanians, 29 percent Slavs, 19 percent Greeks, 12 percent Aromanians, 6 percent Jews, and no Turks at all in Bitola! These great discrepancies become understandable if we remember that what was really known with some certainty was the number of Muslims, and the breakdown into Turks and Albanians was made up of guesses. The Christian Exarchists and Patriarchists were distinguished in the census (Kâncov 1970, 542), but it was difficult to know how to break down the number of Patriarchists into Aromanians, Greeks, and Slavs, especially as some of the Aromanians openly declared themselves to be ethnic Greeks. Moreover, the number of Roma was certainly underestimated in all censuses and population estimates, as it has continued to be to this day.

Keeping all these warnings in mind, we can look at Kâncov’s (1970, 552) figures for Ohrid: among the 14,860 inhabitants, 54 percent were “Bulgarians,” 34 percent, Turks; 5 percent, Albanians; 4 percent, Roma; and 3 percent, Aromanians. But again it is easy to see that the percentages are misleading, because the absolute numbers given by Kâncov are only guesses. The number of all inhabitants seems quite exact (14,860) and probably comes from Ottoman statistics, but the numbers of the ethnic groups are given only in rounded thousands (8,000 “Bulgarians,” 5,000 Turks) or rounded hundreds (800 Albanians and so on; but the Aromanians are counted as 460 so as to arrive at the exact sum total of 14,860). Incidentally, although Kâncov always counted the Macedonian Slavs as “Bulgarians,” in one of his books (Kâncov 1911, 1), he writes that the local Bulgarians and Aromanians call themselves “Macedonians” and that this is also the name that neighboring peoples use for them; moreover, he says that the Turks, the Albanians, and the Greeks of Macedonia never use this name for themselves.

Probably the first professional linguist who made field observations about the use of different languages in the Central Balkans was Gustav Weigand
(1860–1930). The first volume of his important study of the Aromanians (Weigand 1895, which actually appeared the year after the second volume) contains this interesting report from Bitola:

Es ist klar, daß in einer Stadt mit so verschiedenen Nationalitäten auch eine große Vielsprachigkeit herrscht; das Türkische und Bulgarische ist [sic] fast gleich verbreitet, die Aromunen, wenigstens die Männer, können außer ihrer Muttersprache bulgarisch und griechisch, die meisten auch türkisch und albanesisch; viele verstehen selbst das Spanische, das, wie sie wohl fühlen, viele Wörter mit ihrer Sprache gleich oder ähnlich hat. Daß in Gesellschaften zugleich mehrere Sprachen gesprochen werden, ist ganz gewöhnlich. Saß ich z. B. bei meinem Freunde zu Tisch, so sprach ich mit ihm deutsch, mit seiner Mutter griechisch, mit seinen Schwestern aromanisch, mit seinem Bruder, der die englische Schule in Konstantinopel besucht hatte, englisch. Die Befehle an die Dienerschaft wurden nur bulgarisch gegeben; kam Besuch, hielt man sich mehr an das Griechische, das als die Sprache der Gebildeten gilt, und man spricht es in Monastir gut, besser, oder ich will lieber sagen, mehr der Schriftsprache gemäß, als in den meisten Städten Griechenlands. Dafür sorgt vor allem die Schule.4 (Weigand 1895, 6)

Weigand visited mostly among the Aromanians, for whom multilingualism was certainly greater than in most other ethnic groups in the Central Balkans, but we can be fairly certain that such parallel use of languages was usual, as confirmed by the travel reports quoted by Lory (see above). Friedman (2015, 138) quotes a 19th-century verse from Macedonian folklore:

Ozdol ide vraška moma, / turski poje, grčki duma / arbanaški odgovara.

‘Up comes a Vlach maiden, / she sings Turkish, speaks Greek, / answers [in] Albanian.’

Friedman (2015, 138–140) also gives many examples of interlingual code switches in Macedonian folktales and songs, involving Macedonian, Turkish, Greek, Albanian, Aromanian, Judezmo, and Romani in different configurations. As Petrović (2003, 176–177) points out, many Western

4 “It is clear that in a city with so many different nationalities, widespread multilingualism prevails; Turkish and Bulgarian are almost equally distributed. The Aromanians, at least the men, know Bulgarian and Greek, besides their mother tongue, and most of them also know Turkish and Albanian; many even understand Spanish [= Ladino = Judezmo], which, as they readily observe, has many of the same or similar words as their language. It is quite usual that several languages are simultaneously spoken in social gatherings. For instance, when I was sitting at the table in a friend’s home, I spoke German with him, Greek with his mother, Aromanian with his sister, and English with his brother, who had studied at an English school in Constantinople. The orders to the servants were given only in Bulgarian. If a visitor came in, Greek was most often used, as it was considered to be the language of the educated and is spoken in Monastir as well, even better, or, I should say, more closely to the written language, than in most cities in Greece. This [Greek] is cultivated mainly by the schools.”
travelers reported this mix as a Balkan “confusion” in which the languages spoken and the identities declared were not in a simple one-to-one relationship.

What was natural in the Ottoman Empire became an anomaly, owing to the rise of nationalism and the construction of new national identities in the boundaries of new nation-states. As Kitromilides (2007, I: 184) writes, “[i]n its tempestuous course the nineteenth century was to witness the erosion of the common ‘mentality’ of Balkan Orthodoxy and its gradual replacement by mutually exclusive national identities, which more often than not came into violent collision with each other.” The Ottoman era of the Balkans began to be seen as a period of oppression, but actually it was only after the Balkan Wars and the end of the Ottoman rule that many ethnic groups in Macedonia became subject to assimilation pressures (Friedman 2015, 144–152). One of the worst instances was the forced Hellenization of what is now northern Greece, which had been largely Slavic-speaking before its annexation by Greece after the Balkan Wars (Karakasidou 1997; Kostopoulos 2008). In the Prespa region of Albania, the Slavs have had better opportunities to retain their language, and they have official minority status (Steinke & Ylli 2007).

4 The tradition of parallel columns

An interesting historical fact is that Gjorgjija Pulevski (1817–1895), who “was the first Macedonian to define Macedonians in the same way as any other European nation” (Spasov 2008, 415), defined the Macedonian identity in a trilingual conversation manual (Pulevski 1875) in which he acknowledged Macedonia to be a multilingual and multiethnic region. The three languages of the manual are Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish, and, as also pointed out by Friedman (2015, 140–143), Pulevski (1875, 49) stated in the Macedonian text that the Macedonians were a nation living in Macedonia; in the Albanian text, that the Albanians were another nation, which lived partly in Macedonia; and in the Turkish text, that “everyone who lives in Macedonia is called a Macedonian” (Friedman’s translation). In Friedman’s (2015, 143) interpretation, “Pulevski was attempting to articulate both the sense of Macedonian ethnic nationality and the sense of Macedonian as a civic national identity.” The western ideas behind this are, of course, easy to see but, in my opinion, Pulevski’s approach to defining who is Macedonian should also be seen in the context of the Tanzimat (reform) era (1839–1876) of the Ottoman Empire in which he lived. The Ottoman Law of Nationality of 1869 defined for the first time that both Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants
of the empire were Ottomans, and therefore the idea of non-ethnic citizenship was partly applied inside the empire as well (Hanioğlu 2008, 74).

Pulevski designated the three languages of his conversation manual (or rečnik ‘dictionary’, according to its title) as s. makedonski, arbanski, and turski. The abbreviation s. means slavjanski ‘Slavic’ (cf. shkinisht makedonise in the Albanian title), and it is additional proof that he did not claim the simple adjective makedonski exclusively for the Slavic inhabitants of Macedonia. Another interesting detail is that in the preface (called razgovor / kuvend / muhabet ‘conversation’), the text marked as “Slavic Macedonian” is actually written in Serbian; the author explains in Serbian that it is good to know many languages, but the Macedonians (who do not understand Bulgarian, according to the author) must also consolidate their knowledge of the mother tongue. After the preface, all the “Slavic Macedonian” text is then written in Macedonian, with Serbian Cyrillic letters (the book was printed in Belgrade).

Most of Pulevski’s book is arranged in three parallel columns according to the three languages, all three written in Cyrillic. For his contemporaries, there was certainly nothing special in this typographical device: parallel columns were used in various books and even in private notebooks to compare and contrast languages.

The oldest Modern Macedonian Gospel translation, the Konikovo Gospel from the end of the 18th or the beginning of the 19th century, is actually a two-column manuscript with a vernacular Greek text in the left column and its vernacular Macedonian translation in the right column, the latter written in a dialect of the Lower Vardar type (from present-day northern Greece; see Lindstedt, Nuorluoto & Spasov, eds., 2008). Both texts are written in the Greek alphabet. An interesting parallel to this manuscript is the printed bilingual Greek and Albanian New Testament from 1827. It was originally translated by Vangjel Meksi (Evangelos Meksikos, d. ca. 1823) and later edited for print by Grigor Gjirokastriti, who became the Archbishop of Athens under the name Grigorios Argyrokastritis. The Greek text is the same vernacular version that is used in the Konikovo Gospel, and in the same fashion it is printed in the left column (Elsie 1991; Lindstedt 2008, 398, 402).

Perhaps the most famous book based on parallel columns from the early 19th-century Central Balkans was the Lexicon Tetraglosson, which was included in a Greek textbook written by the Aromanian Daniel of Moscopole
The full name of the book in translation was *Introductory Instruction, Containing a Quadrilingual Lexicon of the Four Common Dialects, That Is, Simple Romaic, the Wallachian of Moesia, Bulgarian, and Albanian*. All four languages are written in Greek letters. “Romaic” is the Greek language Daniel wanted to teach through his book; “Wallachian” is Aromanian; “Bulgarian” represents a dialect that would be classified today as Macedonian. The *Lexicon* is not a simple dictionary, but contains parallel texts in the four languages (Ničev 1977; Kahl 2006, 255–258; Detrez 2015, 98–100; Lindstedt 2012, 111–112). In the order of the languages, we can see the mental map of Daniel of Moscopole: Greek in the first column is the language he admired and wanted to disseminate, although, as Ničev (1977, 43–46) shows, he did not know it very well. Aromanian, placed in the second column, was his mother tongue; “Bulgarian” was the language of many Orthodox Christians; and, finally, Albanian, placed in the last column, was the most widespread mother tongue of the local Muslim population, although there were Christian Albanians as well.

The idea of Daniel’s quadrilingual lexicon was not his own invention. Its obvious predecessor was Theodore Kavalliotis’ trilingual (Greek, Aromanian, and Albanian) lexicon, which appeared as part of his Greek textbook *Protopeireia*, printed in Venice in 1770 (Kahl 2006, 249–253). Kavalliotis’ lexicon served as the source of Aromanian and Albanian material for the Swedish linguist and historian Johann Erich Thunmann, an early forerunner of Balkan linguistics (Thunmann 1774).

An example of parallel columns in a personal notebook is the Greek-Macedonian notebook of Petre Kavajof, a citizen of Struga, from the year 1839. As can be seen in the facsimile published by Georgievski (2003), it contains parallel sentences in Classical Greek, Modern Greek, and local Macedonian, written down for the purpose of learning Greek. The exact variety of Modern Greek is not identified by Georgievski and deserves closer study. The columns do not have titles that identify the languages by name, but it is reasonable to assume that Petre Kavajof would not have called his own language “Bulgarian”: as Georgievski (2003, 23–24) points out, Kavajof twice uses the Macedonian word *bugarin* ‘Bulgarian’ to translate the Greek ethnonym *(S)κύθ(ι)ς* ‘Scyth(ian)’.

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5 Many sources give 1794 as the year of the first edition of Daniel’s work, but this is based on a misunderstanding that was copied from one source into another (Ničev 1977, 29–38; Kahl 2006, 256).
In all of these examples, parallel columns are a kind of mental map, a way to conceptualize and illustrate the multilingual reality of the Ottoman Balkans. There was a similar phenomenon in oral folklore: in some songs that were recorded in what used to be, before the Greek Civil War, the southernmost Macedonian-speaking villages at the foot of Mounts Alevitsa and Grammos, each verse is sung first in Greek, then in Macedonian or Albanian (Friedman 2015, 139–140).

The parallel columns also show awareness of different varieties of Greek. Petre Kavajof’s notebook distinguishes between Ancient and Modern Greek. Daniel’s lexicon has only the High variety of Greek, the one he tried to teach to all Balkan Christians, but both in the Konikovo Gospel and in the Greek and Albanian Gospel of 1827 (see above), the left column is in a Low variety. I think this served as a justification for the translations: because a vernacular Greek version of the Gospel existed (cf. Leiwo 2008), vernacular Albanian and Macedonian versions were also possible. In a way, this had also been the basis of the Damascene literature in Macedonian and Bulgarian: it was the Greek vernacular of the originals that licensed the use of a Low variety of Balkan Slavic in the translations.

5 Conclusions

Until the Balkan Wars, the inhabitants of the Central Balkans lived in a multilingual, multiethnic, and multi-religious society, where the place of different groups was relatively regulated and ethnic clashes were rare. There were, of course, great differences in the rights of the different groups, and the languages were by no means equal, either in their prestige or in their official status. Ottoman Turkish was the state and administrative language, and Greek was the prestige language of the Orthodox Christian population, so much so that a kind of Greek-speaking proto-nation of “Romans” was being formed in the Balkans before the modern national movements split the empire’s Orthodox millet (self-governing group) into modern nations (Detrez 2015). At the other end of the prestige scale, no one was interested in the language of the Roma, who were a despised and dreaded minority.  

In this unequal, but stable and regulated multilingual society, it must have been usual for people to speak many languages, and, especially in the middle

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6 The Greek-born Demetra Vaka (also known as Demetra Kenneth Brown) in her travel book *The Heart of the Balkans* (Vaka, 1917, 145–174) tells of the hostile attitudes toward the Roma. Quite exceptionally, she herself had formed a friendship with a Roma girl in her childhood on the island of Büyükkada, and she met her friend again as an adult.
of the prestige scale, this kind of individual bilingualism and multilingualism was symmetrical. The speakers of Turkish and Greek may not have been particularly motivated to learn other languages, because others were expected to learn theirs. At the other end of the prestige scale, no one was motivated (or even allowed) to learn Romani, though the Roma themselves have always learned the main languages of their surroundings. But in the middle of the prestige scale, many speakers of Albanian, Balkan Slavic, and Aromanian knew each other’s languages, and for that reason their languages were subject to the strongest convergent tendencies (Lindstedt, forthcoming).

The significance of the Central Balkans for Balkan linguistics is twofold. First, as an area of strong ethnic mixing (see the maps in Weigand 1895 and Magoscszi 2002), it manifested the Balkan sprachbund phenomena in their strongest form. Second, because Macedonia, together with Albania was the last part of the Balkans to remain under Ottoman rule (with the exception of the small European part of Turkey that still exists), historical sources that reported the local linguistic situation are the easiest to find for this region. But it was precisely the ethnically-mixed character of Macedonia, which left it outside the first national states of the Balkans, yet subject to their conflicting territorial demands, that finally led to the Balkan Wars and to the loss of some of the better aspects of the Ottoman heritage.

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