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LINGUISTIC IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT OF TWO SLAVIC SPEAKING (SUB)URBAN GROUPS IN ALBANIA: FIER AND ELBASAN¹

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Abstract:

The article dwells upon linguistic identity reflected in the linguistic management of two Slavic-speaking groups in Albania: the descendants of migrants from Sandžak (now in the Republic of Serbia) in Fier and the vicinity and the recent migrants from Golloborda in Elbasan. These groups were not previously described in the literature. The choice of the forms by the informants reflects two contrary processes: Albanian influence over their Slavic and the desire to represent their idiom as close to a preferred “umbrella” Standard language.

Keywords: Slavic dialectology, Slavic dialects of Albania, Slavic and Albanian language contacts, Balkan Sprachbund, Critical Discourse Analysis

The Slavic dialectology has provided a good picture of Slavic dialects in the border zones of Albania that adjoin the corresponding dialectal regions in the “umbrella” countries. The Slavic dialect in the Albanian part of Gora is transitive between Debar²-Reka and Gorni Polog, on the one hand, and Prizren-Sredska, on the other hand (Vidoeski 1998: 349), that is open to the huge zone of Prizren-Timok dialects; Golloborda continues Debar dialects

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² For the geographical names I use the orthography of the state language of the respective country. For the transborder regions the terms most widely encountered in the literature are used.

(Vidoeski 1998: 339), the Slavic dialect in Albanian Prespa is part of the larger Prespa area (Koneski 1957), Vërnik shares the same dialekt with Koresteia (Vidoeski 1998: 347³), etc. Without going into further detail I would like only to refer to Kl. Steinke and Xh. Ylli's series of descriptions of Slavic dialects in Albania (Steinke, Ylli 2007; 2008; 2012; 2013) that also include a full-length bibliography on the topic.

However, the presence of huge Slavic groups in Albanian cities inside the country is somehow under-exposed in the publications I am acquainted with. In several of them it is noted that Slavs live in big Albanian cities such as Tirana, Durrës, Elbasan, Korça, Fier and others without further elaboration⁴. The focusing on the villages as opposed to the groups of Slavs in the cities is understandable.

First, the village communities seem stable in space and time and usually have strong distinctive features. When coming to the same village in several decades we take for granted (supposing no catastrophies have happened since) that a community continues to exist within the same *constants* (macrolandscape as mountains, rivers, valleys, etc), and still retains most of the *dominant characteristics* or all of them (language, state belonging, anthropological type, social structure etc), while certain *variables* may have changed (see Sobolev 2013: 23-26 on *konstanty*, *dominanty* and *peremennye* in the Balkans).

Second, the situation in urban environment is quite different. The Slavic groups in the Albanian cities are heterogenous, they come from different regions⁵, the borders between them and other urban communities cannot be easily drawn (due to mixed marriages and the tendency to lose the language and other distinctive features in the next generations), they still have unclear status as to whether they ought to be counted as part of the village community (since they usually go back to the villages on certain occasions⁶). In other words, when dwelling upon the groups of Slavic migrants in the Albanian cities, one has to account for too

³ See also the latest publication on a Koresteia dialect of Drenoveni (Koroloff 2015).

⁴ The existence of Slavs in Elbasan is sometimes dwelt upon briefly in the literature (e.g. Tončeva 2009: 188, 214, 221, 239, 270, 284, etc).

⁵ As I was told by members of a Muslim Slavic migrant group about the members of another Christian one, they have *društvo* 'communication; society', but they do not have *prijateljstvo* 'friendship', because the latter ones are *risjani* 'Christian'.

⁶ Coming on certain festive days to a village one can have an erroneous idea that it is still Slavic dominating, because the migrants come back on these days, take part in church services, actively interact and communicate. Cf. the day of Transfiguration (19th of August, following the Julian calendar after the Macedonian Orthodox Church, as opposed to the practice in Albanian Orthodox Church that celebrates it on 6th of August) in Herbel and Ascension (variable date depending on the Easter, on the same day in Albanian and Macedonian Orthodox Church) in Kërçisht i Sipërm that serve as such festivals for migrants from the villages that now live in Albanian cities or in Macedonia. Sometimes the migrants (and/or their children) spend some part of the summer in their villages of origin, normally residing in Germany, Austria or Italy. This time is used for communication with the members of the community and finding marriage partners (Schmidinger 2013:129-130 on Gora).

many factors (many of which seem to be individual and different for every speaker) which makes the subject of research seem unstable and depending on a mere chance after all⁷.

If the situation is so unstable, might be changing so rapidly, and depends on subjective decisions of the speakers, one might ask, what is the point in studying the speech of Slavic migrants in Albanian cities? Does it constitute a proper research subject?

To speak about the language varieties used by Slavic speaking (sub)urban groups in Albania as a proper research subject in this regard, it is important to underline that there are processes and circumstances valid for all or the majority of them. These language varieties in spite of all their fluidity exist in certain system of constants. It is not my concern in this article to attempt at describing the landscape as a constant⁸. However, several dominant characteristics valid for the Slavic urban and suburban groups in Albania are still at hand, to mention a few:

- the status of the groups that makes it possible for them to be described as hidden minorities⁹, some of which are unknown not only to the authorities, but to the academic circles of the “umbrella countries” as well;
- the language systems in contact are Slavic vs. Albanian (dominant feature), eventhough the Slavic dialects can vary (they may be Balkan Slavic, that is the case of Golloborda, Gora, Boboshtica etc or non-Balkan South Slavic, that is the

⁷ It happens that after communicating with an informant and recording several particularly interesting narratives the researcher comes to the idea that in the next interviews it would be fruitful to focus on certain points. However, the next time the researcher comes to the place after some time, there is not a trace of the informant, his phone is switched off, at his workplace nobody knows about his whereabouts and other informants that happen to know him say he has left somewhere after his wife’s death and has not left any indication of his plans. Thus the only lasting testimony are the recorded narratives.

⁸ Though in Elbasan as well as many other places in Albania where groups of Slavs are dispersed it might be an interesting case, considering the lasting human existence in the region and the stability of the landscape. A good example is the Ancient Egnatia Road, which route is mainly followed by the modern road Durrës – Elbasan – Qafa e Thanës – Ohrid and then to Thessaloniki (Jovani 1953).

⁹ Even though the words *hidden minority*, strictly speaking, are not a wide-used term in the academic literature in English, in this article it is used in a strict sense, following the proposal of the seminar in Radenci, Slovenia (see details in Promicer 2004). Biljana Sikimić gives the following definition: “Hidden minorities are populations small in number that have common origin and unsolved status with the respect to the state they live in (they do not insist on granting them minority rights or they are not allowed to), they do not have their own intellectual elite, often they do not act as political subject and are loyal to the state they live in” (Sikimić 2007: 11).

case of Borakaj, Fier and Vraka)¹⁰, as well as the Albanian varieties they are in contact with¹¹, thus providing a list of variables;

- the set of linguistic identities does not differ very much and is quite limited: either the term “Albanian” is used as a label for the citizens of the country; “Turkish” (Sobolev, Novik 2013) on the religious grounds; different Slavic labels according to the preferred ‘umbrella’ country (“Serbian”, “Bosnian”, “Macedonian”, “Bulgarian”...). The discourses about identity usually centre around a dichotomy (“We are Macedonian, not Bulgarian”, “We are Albanian, not Macedonian”, “We are Turks, not Albanian” etc.)¹². In other zones of Slavic-non-Slavic contact the set of linguistic identities may differ a lot, compare the “European” identity that is reflected in the discourse of the Pomaks in Northern Greece about themselves (other possible but rejected terms being “Greek”, “Turkish”, and “Bulgarian”), see Mihail 2003.
- all (sub)urban Slavic groups in Albania are in an unstable situation that will end in most of the cases with language attrition – and language attrition and limited competence in Slavic is to a large extent an explanation for many of the processes going on in these groups.

The change of the original location of the groups makes them especially interesting due to the fact that they come into contact with the language groups they have had no connection previously: it is not limited only to contacts between two or more Slavic dialects that originally shared no common borders. New contacts with Balkan dialects Slavs have not been

¹⁰ In Kamenica (Korça region) I was told by my informants (children of a woman from Trebisht that married a *Kamenicar*), that there is another woman in the village that speaks almost like them, but differently so they do not understand everything. It turned out she came from Borakaj – the dialects of origin (that of Trebisht in Golloborda and that of Borakaj, an idiom of migrants from Mostar area in Bosnia) belong to remote areas of the South Slavic (eventhough mutually understandable to some extent), but in the village they live in the same quarter.

¹¹ Cf. the sentence in Slavic I heard in Tirana from migrants from Golloborda (i) that they immediately translated into Albanian (ii):

i. *da panime na moke i ke se razbereme*
Comp fall.1PI on force.PI and Fut refl understand.1PI

ii. *me ran ngusht, do merremi vesh*
with fall.Part narrow Fut take.1PI ear

after we get into a complicated situation, we’ll understand each other.

The Albanian translation contains a “new infinitive” form (*me* ‘with’ + participle) that is not a part of the current standard but is used in Gheg dialects spoken also in Dibra area, where Golloborda is located.

¹² One of my informants (male, born in 1960 in Vorbnica) plays with his youngest daughter (5 y.o.) in the following way. He calls her on the phone and asks: “Što si ti? Albanka si?” – “Ne! Ne sum Albanka, ja sum Makedonka!” – “A da ti kupime albanski čeiz, ke kažeš deka si Albanka?” – “Ne! Ja sum Makedonka!” (“What are you? Are you Albanian?” – “No! I’m not Albanian, I’m Macedonian!” – And what if we buy you Albanian dowry, will you tell that you are Albanian?” – “No! I’m Macedonian!”).

in direct contact with emerge, e.g. Çam Albanian – large groups of Çams live in Borakaj and Rreth Libofsha and they also have mixed marriages with the local Slavic population.

This article thus treats urban groups of Slavs (especially those living in the city of Elbasan; their economic activity depends on the city – they are carpenters, electricians, builders, business people – and has very limited connection with agriculture) and suburban groups (especially those living in the city of Fier and several villages around; their economic activities include agriculture as well as city-connected activities but the city and the interaction within it still have important place in the daily activities of most of the members of the community). This (sub)urban status opens them for Albanian language influence to a much larger extent than those living in the villages in the periphery of the country.

The language management is a framework developed by a group of Czech linguists (see the introduction into the history and the theory of language management in Neustupný, Nekvapil 2003) that combines pragmatics, language policy, a variety of approaches to language that are also known under the term *Critical Discourse Analysis* (see Fairclough 1989: 6 et passim) and a broad range of areas that help explain the choices the speakers make. It is fruitful for the topic because it gives theoretical grounds that allow to compare speech representation of certain phenomena with what is expected in the corresponding language system and then mapping the difference to a certain stance of the speaker. This provides grounds for speculating about linguistic ideology that might have been expressed in the speaker's choice of forms.

1. Fier Muslim Slavic community¹³

The Slavic island idiom in Fier and its vicinity dates back to the migration of 114 families that left Sandžak in Southern Serbia and adjacent areas (Novi Pazar, Stara Raška, Rožaja, Tutin, Ribarica, Bučići) in 1924 and moved to Elbasan valley, then got land in Fier region in 1933 and moved to the place they can still be found nowadays. A part of the population lives in Fier, other live in the municipality Rreth Libofsha, in the village of Hamil (Dërmenas municipality), village Petova (Brostar municipality) and in the central quarter of village Patos. The leader of the local Serbian initiative “Jedinstvo” mentions 2 500 Slavs (“Serbs”) in Fier and the vicinity. They exist in a multilingual setting without constituting a

¹³ The data about the Fier Muslim Slavic community were collected in 2013 in extensive semi-structured interviews with the members of the community. It has to be stressed that the outline of the history of the community is also based on the informants' words.

majority in any of the places¹⁴. For the speech of the migrants I use the term *idiom* (short for “the idiom of Muslims Slavs in Fier and the vicinity”), while for the speech in the place of origin the term *dialect* or *Novi Pazar-Sjenica dialect* is used. It is connected to the specific circumstances and to limited language competence of part of the speakers. The language competence drops in every generation so in the community of speakers at the same time there is a wide range of spoken forms of the idiom and there is no single norm that would be referred to as to minimize the number of variants.

As will be shown, the limited competence and existing of various language forms at the same time result in new and heterogenous forms that come from more than one source and differentiate the idiom from its original dialect¹⁵.

Rreth Libofsha has a population of about 2000 (Muslim Slavs are only about 500 people leaving in 112 houses). There is also a small Bektashi Albanian group in the village. The Vlachs apparently came from Bitola region during Balkan wars.

There is considerable religious and ethnic tolerance in the village, proved by many mixed marriages¹⁶. My informants underlined this tolerance several times and according to them there have not been any conflicts on the religious ground.

The name “Serbian” and “Serbs” used by the locals in the talks with me may seem problematic, considering the argument about the name of the successors of Serbo-Croatian standard language in post-Yugoslavian states in general, the discussion over the ethnical belonging of Muslim Slavic population of Sandžak and the proper label for their language (Serbian or Bosnian) in particular. For example, in 2014 the leader of Bosnian Council of Kosovo Sahit Kandić accused the local Serbian initiative of Fier in pro-Serbian propaganda and indoctrination of the youth, that supposedly makes them ignorant of their alleged Bosnian past and fosters a Serbian identity¹⁷. However, I use the same label following my informants

¹⁴ See Table 1 showing the ethnoconfessional division of the village of Rreth Libofsha.

¹⁵ When asked how they feel about the language they hear in Novi Pazar, one of the informants answered, that it is the same language, but theirs is more archaic and while he always understands what the people in Novi Pazar say, they do not always understand him.

¹⁶ An example of the religious tolerance is a tradition followed by Muslims to spend a night in St. Cosmas church to be healthy. It is not specific to this place and is known elsewhere in Albania: irrespectively of faith, people come to saint places (*vakëfs*) to spend a night there and thus become healthier. In Kamenitsa (Korça region) the Albanian Orthodox Church supports the facilities of a monastery that has no monks or religious service (it is held occasionally for most important holidays by a visiting priest) to provide pilgrims with shelter when they spend the nights. It is believed that St. Nickolas will give his blessing to people that spend the night in the *vakëf*. The Muslim pilgrims call him *Ajder Baba* ‘translation’?. According to the custodian of the monastery, a Muslim recently converted to Orthodoxy, there is an old Muslim saying *Kamenica me tri mahallë, në mes e ka Ajder Babanë* ‘Kamenica with three quarters, in the middle it has Ajder Baba’.

¹⁷ “[S]vi oni imaju muslimanska imena što zapravo govori o njihovom bošnjačkom identitetu. Jer, dakako, nemogu danas Ramiz, Asim ili pak Ekrem Duljević biti srbi kad to nisu bili od Kulina-bana do današnjeg dana – neg’ sandžački bošnjaci! U tim “školama” se sprovodi odgoj raseljenih sandžaklija da vole i žive za “majku

practice. During my stay in Fier and Rreth Libofsha and my field-work within the local Slavic population in September 2013 I did not come across any informant calling themselves “Bosnian”, while “Serbian” was the name they would use to refer to themselves as opposed to the Albanians. At the same time, by use of the term “Serbian” or “Muslim Slavs” I am not making a statement about their ethnical belonging or language identity; neither is it a statement about the ethnical and language labels that should be used for Sandžak.

The inner Albanian problematics should also be kept in mind. In Borakaj (where my informants proclaimed themselves to be Bosnian) I was told that the fact that the Muslim Slavs from Fier do not embrace the Bosnian identity but proclaim themselves to be Serbs, made it easier for them to obtain an official status for the Serbian and Montenegrin community (in Albania, they are officially considered to form one “Serbo-Montenegrin minority”), but made getting the respective status for the Bosnian community quite hard, as without that group they are smaller in number. The Bosnian community in Albania is still not recognised as an ethnic minority (*minoritet kombëtar*) which means that they do not have access to state funds for the minorities and cannot send their representative to the State Minority Council (an advisory board under the Council of Ministers of Albania). It complicates the relations between the two communities.

The organisation that makes a claim about the Serbian identity of the successors of the migrants from Sandžak to Fier and the area is the local initiative called “Jedinstvo”, created in April, 2012 with an office in Fier. Its leader, Eqerem Duleviç, also has opened courses of Standard Serbian in Rreth Libofsha (on 18 September of 2010). He is a businessman and invests his own money into this project (hiring drivers, teachers and paying the rent for the office of “Jedinstvo”). At the time of my stay, the Serbian state only provided teaching materials for the courses.

The Muslim Slavic community in Fier and the vicinity shows signs of a language change. While the first generation that was already born in Albania still uses Slavic, in the second generation some people do not speak it. The third and the fourth generations speak almost no Slavic at all. It is remarkable that within the “Jedinstvo”’s policy towards the

Srbiju” i indoktrinira mladi naraštaj koji će obožavat katile koji su samo prije jednog stoljeća upravo nad njihovim precima u Sandžaku počinili pogrom klanja, pljačkanja i proganjanja sa svojih vjekovnih ognjišta” (“All of them have Muslim names that specifically indicate their Bosnian identity. Because anyway today it is impossible that Ramiz, Asim or Ekrem Duljević are Serbs as they have not been from the time of Kulin-ban until today, but they are Bosnians! In those schools the Sandžak migrants are brought up to love and to live for “Mother Serbia” and the young generation is indoctrinated to adore the slaughterers that just a century ago pogromed, looted and expelled their ancestors from their age-old homes”) – Sahit Kandić. Posrbljavanje Bošnjaka u Albaniji (<http://sandzakpress.net/posrbljavanje-bosnjaka-u-albaniji>, accessed on December, 31st, 2015).

Serbian identity Serbian is taught not in its local form by some of the locals, but in its standard form. The teacher is a local Albanian that has learnt Serbian as a foreign language and is not a member of the community. During the course the children learn some useful expressions, counting, the hymn of Serbia, can understand a limited amount of written and spoken Serbian, but prefer speaking to each other and at home in Albanian. They learn both Cyrillic and Latin scripts. I spoke with a young villager (3rd generation) who is a student in Belgrade and has a perfect command of Standard Serbian, however, when he skypees with his father who lives in the village they speak Albanian.

As an example I give an excerpt from the transcript of my talk with the leader of “Jedinstvo” initiative, a second generation speaker born in Rreth Libofsha (see the full excerpt in the Appendix).

The systematic study of the idiom still needs to be undertaken, however several observations of various phenomena can be made.

The use of ordinal numbers instead of cardinal clearly shows an Albanian influence:

1. *Onĩ, stàri mòi, su_dòš-li nã dvàjset-čètiri, kàd je_bi-lo drùga ráta*
they old.Masc.Pl my.Masc.Pl come.Praet.Masc.Pl on 24 when be-Neut.Praet second war
They, my old ones, came in [19]24 when there was the second war (Rreth Libofsha, 06.09.2013, male, born in 1968).¹⁸

The instability of the forms of numbers is very common in the speech of Slavs from many parts of Albania: e.g., in Boboshtica either cardinal numbers are used instead of ordinal with dates, or they just say the number in Albanian¹⁹:

2. *vo srjed noštã-ta, vo dymbëdhjet-ën e nat-ës, grjed-e faldžori-ti*
in amidst night-Def in twelve-Acc.Def Agr night-Acc.Def come-3pl faldžore-Def
on midnight, at 12 pm, the faldžore²⁰ come (Boboshtica, 18.07.2011, female, born in 1937).²¹

¹⁸ Here and further I apply a simplified notation skipping noting most of the grammatical features I do not focus on in this article.

¹⁹ One of the informants in Boboshtica when telling the history of the village tried to do so in his Slavic dialect, but whenever he would have to mention a date he would stop and write the date on a piece of paper asking me how I say it.

²⁰ Mythical creatures that make the prediction for the life of the child.

²¹ The text in Albanian is given in italics.

Sometimes grammatical elements of Albanian are incorporated into the speech in Slavic. For example, in the following example the accusative clitic *i* loaned from Albanian is incorporated into the flow of speech without any pauses or other signals of code-switching:

3. *Krâlj Zögu ní-je i dâo da se vrátu nà svoje mèsto*
 King Z. Neg-be.Pres.3sg Acc give-Pt.Masc.Sg Comp Refl return.Praes.3Pl to their place
 King Zog did not let them return to their place (Rreth Libofsha, 06.09.2013, male, born in 1968)

Maybe the most significant here is the target infinitive construction that might illustrate two contrary linguistic processes happening at the same time:

4. MM: *Zašto su rešili da pođu u Tursko iz Srbije?*
 ED: *Jâ tô nè_znam, jèsu sèli... tò_je_bila râta, dà... tò da_spàsti glâvu. Sàmo za_tò*
 (Fier,
 MM: Why did they decide to leave for Turkey from Serbia?
 ED: I don't know that. It was war, to... to save one's head. Just for that.

- 4a. *tò da spàs-ti glâv-u*
 that Comp save-INF head-ACC.SG

The syntax of *tò da_spàsti glâvu* seems to be calquing the Albanian *që të shpëtojnë kokën*, even though *që* and *to* are not literal translations.

In Albanian, *që* is a universal complementiser that may stand alone or together with other conjunctions; the complex *që të* is usually used in a final function. The verb in the scope of *që të* in Standard Albanian is in finite conjunctive form (usually equal to the indicative except for the 2nd and 3rd person Sg)²².

In Serbian, *da* does not require any additional strengthening elements. Here, the use of the strengthening element, in this case, *to* (not used in this function in the standard Serbian language) may be directly attributed to Albanian influence. What is also remarkable is the use of the infinitive in the scope of *da*. It may be used in Standard Serbian, even though the finite form is preferable (in this respect, making Standard Serbian much closer to Albanian).

²² Here the differences between local Tosk dialects and the standard language that is mainly based on the Tosk norm can be neglected.

According to D. Bajraktarević, in the Novi Pazar-Sjenica dialect verb objects (non-predicative use in the scope of another VP) usually have *da*-complementiser as a head and this construction is far more frequent than the infinitive one (Bajraktarević 1966: 125). At the same time, the most widely used form of the infinitive is the short one (Bajraktarević 1966: 97²³, in other words, without the final vowel). Thus the verb *spàsti* ‘to save’ in the dialect has the form *spàs* (Ibidem). This makes it clear that *spàsti* in 4 definitely results from Standard Serbian influence.

I would explain the emergence of the structure *tò da_spàsti glâvu* by two contrasting processes. On the one hand, Albanian is the first language for the speaker in question and it has serious uncontrolled influence on his Slavic that is reflected in the use of the strengthening *to*. At the same time, the infinitive is a feature of Serbian grammar that does not exist in Standard Albanian and in the Albanian Tosk dialect of Fier area. Its use may be monitored and could be taken as a sign of linguistic awareness, a linguistic symbol of Standard Serbian as opposed to Albanian or a native Slavic idiom. It is remarkable that the full infinitive form is used rather than shortened forms in the idiom.

Another sign of linguistic awareness that guides the speakers' choice of forms (individual language management as termed by Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003) is the hyper-correct use of *je* instead of *e* in *u cjentar od Novi Pazar* (not included in the transcript)²⁴.

A systematic approach based on the comparison of the speech of migrants to Fier area and Novi Pazar-Sjenica dialects appears to be promising. But even a short analysis of the traits that emerge in some excerpts seems to give an idea on how Albanian influences the Slavic speech in Albania.

2. Muslim Slavs from Golloborda in Elbasan²⁵

The term “Muslim Slavs from Golloborda” without further labelling refers to a recent monograph dedicated to Golloborda. In the chapter specifically dedicated to the issues of

²³ Even though the explanation is not very clear: “Kod glagola na *-ti* dvojak je infinitiv: sa *i* i bez njega u čemu se gleda ostatak supina. Dati ma kakvo pravilo kada se upotrebljava duži, a kada kraći oblik, teško je. Zapazio sam da se na celom ovom području upotrebljava kraći oblik bez obzira na mesto u rečenici i bez imalo uticaja akcenta” (“The verbs in *-ti* have two types of infinitive: with *i* and without it that is considered to be a trace of supine. To give whatever rule when to use the long form and when to use the short form is difficult. I noticed that throughout this area the short form is used that does not account for the position and is not influenced by the accent”). I found no examples of “full infinitive” in the texts of Novi Pazar-Sjenica dialect provided by D. Bajraktarević: all the infinitives I found are short.

²⁴ The dialects of Novi Pazar-Sjenica have a mixed representation of the *jat* vowel (Bajraktarević 1966: 14-43, cf. in Rreth Libofsha *jèsu sèli, Senica, u_sèlo* – in a single informant’s speech).

²⁵ The data was collected in Elbasan in 2013 and 2015 in semi-structured interviews with the members of the group.

identity and self-consciousness the term “Muslim Slavs of Golo Bordo/Golloborda”/Rus. “slavjane-musulmane Golo Bordo/Golobordy” is proposed (Sobolev et al. 2013: 182). The use of this quite complex term is inevitable in the situation of competing identity discourses. The situation is quite confusing due to the following facts:

1) Some of the discourses about the ethnicity in Golloborda have strong support from outside the region, as the discourse about the Bulgarian or Macedonian identity;

2) The local discourse is not homogenous and labels as *naš jozik*, *naši luđe*, *makedonski*, *bugarski*²⁶ and *turski* may be heard in the interviews (Ibid: 179-182);

3) Academic works sooner or later become available to the informants, so here we face the well-known observer paradox: by simply using this or that label we as researchers might influence the object of the research.

Considering all this, I am using the broader term “Muslim Slavs (from Goloborda in Elbasan)”, despite being aware of its imperfectness. I attempt to avoid unnecessary discussions about the proper label or potential definition of this group. Whatever this decision is, it should be made by the group. I must add, however, that no one from my interviewees from the Slavic community of Golloborda in Elbasan or Tirana called themselves Bulgarians and the term “Macedonian” was the only one they would use to refer to themselves.

There are data about Slavs in Elbasan since the 15th century (see Makartsev 2014 and the bibliography on the topic) but that group seems to have been assimilated and there is no continuity between it and the Muslim Slavs that may be found in the city nowadays. They started settling in Elbasan in 1920s originating from Golloborda (see Eldárov 2000: 223, 235, 252 with the data for 1929-1930), and the first evidence of their existence in the region is the plate in the foundation of the mayor’s office with the title in Latin alphabet “Usta Jonuz Trebishta 1923” (published in Makartsev 2014). This community has always retained strong ties with their villages of origin in Golloborda. The migration was temporal at the beginning, as the dwellers of Golloborda (and wider, Debar region) are well-known in the Central Balkans as good builders, so that their brigades travelled through the region searching for job (*gurbet/kurbet*). In Elbasan, as a growing city, there was steady demand for them, so many brigades would stay permanently. The way from Golloborda to Elbasan via Librazhd is about 70-80 kilometres, so the communication with Golloborda was not too complicated, the fact which supported taking wives from Golloborda as well and continuous taking part in the life

²⁶ Some informants call the idiom *bulgárcko* as well (female, born in Trebisht, married to Kamenica near Korça, in her 40s). Kl. Steinke and Xh. Ylli (2008: 291) in the register of words that were explained by the informants also indicate *bugáčko* ‘бугарски’ (Trebisht).

of the villages. Even now the majority of my informants were born in Golloborda and only arrived in Elbasan later, quite often as apprentices of older builders.

The migration was fostered in the 1970s²⁷ when the integrated iron and steel factory “The Party’s Steel” was being built, and the largest migration my informants recall took place in 1982 when 93 families from Trebisht came to Elbasan. “According to official sources, almost a half of the villagers left (Golloborda – M.M.) for big cities, both close and far away: to Tirana, Durrës, Fier, Bulqiza, Peshkopia, etc” (Steinke, Ylli 2008: 21). It is hard to estimate the number of families that live in Elbasan and still use a Slavic dialect, but they are quite numerous.

This internal type of migration (the place of origin is in the same country, the communication is easy) makes it problematic in labelling the generations as “first”, “second” or “third”, taking into account the constant influx from the place of origin.

Until nowadays, the main professions of Muslim Slavs in Elbasan are builders and carpenters. Older people gather in the morning in a café near the eastern wall of the fortress and drink coffee, discuss news (the largest group I have seen consisted of about 15 people at several tables).

The linguistic situation is defined, firstly, by the Slavic-Albanian bilingualism²⁸, and secondly, by various types of diglossia.

Diglossia with other Slavic idioms

Even with the lack of systematic education in the Standard Macedonian language in Golloborda (even more so in Elbasan) many of its dwellers communicate with the people from the other side of the border. It became even easier with the opening of the check point Trebisht-Džepišta (before that, they had to use the check-points Bilatë-Blato or Qafë Thanë-Ćafasan). At the same time, Macedonian radio and television are easily available in the villages of Golloborda²⁹ and were available even during the communist period in Albania. In the years after 1990, many people from there travelled not only to Macedonia, but to Bulgaria and Serbia as well. Several of my informants would switch between at least two idioms, e.g., one of them (male, born in 1957 in Trebisht, moved to Elbasan as a child) was using an idiom similar to Standard Macedonian when talking to me and an idiom similar to Golloborda

²⁷ At this time Elbasan becomes a centre of population gravity from throughout Albania, compare the figures showing the population growth: 1960 – 29 000, 1970 – 41 700, 1979 – 61 100, 1990 – 83 000 (Hall 1994: 405 according to Bici 2007: 93)

²⁸ Here and further, an ability of a speaker to speak two languages as mother tongues. Diglossia is an ability of a speaker to speak two varieties of a language as mother varieties.

²⁹ Bulgarian and Serbian televisions are also available.

dialect when talking to his uncle (compare the following markers: *svadba* ~ *svabda*, *jazik* ~ *jozik*, *svrši* ~ *svorši*, *so vas* ~ *so vami*, the first member of the pair is Standard and the second is dialectal).

In the case of another informant that has made some trade (*tǎrgovija*) with Bulgarians and has been to Bulgaria several times, a trigger (recalling a Bulgarian that had done some research in Golloborda) was enough for several Bulgarian features to surface into his speech:

5. *Beše edna **bǎlgarka**, ja poranu imam raboteno **tǎrgovija**, I taja na knjigata, na vesnikot, glaveniot vesnik **bǎlgarski** i dve sliki, na prvoto livče dve sliki od dve nevesti oblečeni od Trebišta, so **obljǎklo**, znajš?*

There was a **Bulgarian**, before I was used to work in the **trade**, and in the book, in the newspaper, the main **Bulgarian** newspaper, she [published] two photos. On the first page two pictures of two brides in [the folk] dress from Trebisht, with **costume**, you know? (Elbasan, 03.07.13, male, born in 1950s)

The word *obljǎklo* ‘costume’ is particularly interesting, because the dialect of Goloborda is predominantly ekavian, though some traits show previous wide use of [’a] reflex (Sobolev, Novik 2013: 43). However, the accent in the dialect is antepenultimate (with usually motivated deviations from the rule: the impossibility of accent over *da*, etymological accent in the loans as *demék* etc. – Ibid, 41), so the form *obljǎklo* cannot be explained otherwise than a Bulgarian loan (cf. Bulgarian *oblekló* ‘the same’). The [’a] reflex might be explained as a marker of Bulgarian as opposed to Golloborda dialect (the Bulgarian forms Aor.1sg *obljǎkoh*, L-participle.Fem *obljǎkla* may also have influenced the speaker’s decision).

Albanian and interlingual hybrids

Albanian is not only a source of words that do not exist in the dialect. Sometimes even though the Albanian influence is clear, its paths are still uncertain. Compare the following sentence (example 6 with the notation in 6a):

6. *Mídžo, o mǐdžo, a kujtóheš ná um, toj, što béše v Trébišta, Blágojev, toj od Bugárijia što pišúvaše <...> toj póčinat e, úmreto <?> e... úmren* (Elbasan, 01.07.13, male, born in 1957)

Uncle, oh uncle, do you remember that one that was in Trebišta, Blagojev, the one from Bulgaria that was writing? He died.

- 6a. *Mídžo, o mídžo, a kujtó-hesh ná um*
 uncle Voc uncle Interr remember-Refl on mind
 Uncle, oh uncle, do you remember

The construction “*kujtohesh na um*” is obviously a hybrid. In Albanian there are at least two ways to say “to remember”, one is with the form *kujtoj* ‘to recall from memory: remember’ and the other one is *mbaj (në) mend* ‘to remember’ (lit. ‘keep in mind’). The reflexive *kujtohem* ‘to have it occur to me: remember, recall’ (7) – in this case the subject is the thing recalled – or ‘to get to the point quickly, understand right away’³⁰ (8) – in this case the subject is the addressee:

7. *S’ më kujtohet emr-i i tij*
 Neg me.Dat remember.Refl.3sg.Praes name-Def AdjAgr his
 His name doesn’t come to my mind.

8. *Mos e zgjat, se u kujto-va*
 Neg Acc make.long.Imp that Refl remember-Aor
 Don’t continue it, because I got it

While in Standard Albanian the subject should be the thing that comes to one’s mind (in this case, the name of Blagoj Šklifov and the sad news about him³¹), in this example it seems that the subject is the addressee (cf. Standard Macedonian *se sekávam za nešto* ‘I remember about something’ that uses a reflexive form with the addressee as a subject). So it seems that (Standard?) Macedonian has some influence on the reflexive form of the Albanian verb. It should be also added that the Albanian reflexive ending *-hesh* (Praes.Refl.2Sg³²) is phonetically very close to the Slavic *-Vš* (Praes.2Sg; in first conjugation with the thematic vowel *-e-* it even occurs in the form *-eš*³³) so the form *kujtoheš* seems to exist as something in between two language codes in the bilingual idiom.

³⁰ The English translation according to Newmark 1999.

³¹ The lack of *na* for direct animate object (nota accusativi personalis) that is widely used in Golloborda can be explained by the fact that *toj* is topical.

³² Compare the full present paradigm: 1Sg *kujtohem*, 2Sg *kujtohesh*, 3Sg *kujtohet*, 1Pl *kujtohemi*, 2Pl *kujtoheni*, 3Pl *kujtohen*.

³³ I am not aware of any examples of the full paradigms for the dialect. A. Sobolev, A. Novik (2013: 47-60) do not provide them. Kl. Steinke, Xh. Ylli (2008: 110-114) give a table with endings and many examples, however, firstly, the examples are taken from many Golloborda villages and do not represent a single idiom; secondly, no

The remaining part of the construction, *ná um* is Slavic. In Standard Macedonian, the locative construction with *um* ‘mind’ allows for at least two prepositions, *na* ‘on’ and *v* ‘in’, cf. the following phraseological units with *na*: *ima na um* ‘lit. to have on (his/her) mind’, *mu padne na um* ‘he remembered’; ‘it occurred to him’; ‘he decided’ (lit. ‘it falls on his mind’); *na um mu e* ‘he constantly thinks about it’; ‘he is obsessed with it’ (lit. ‘it is on his mind’); *stavi go toa na um* ‘remember something good’ (lit. ‘put it on the mind’); *što na um, toa na drum* ‘to talk without restraints’ (lit. ‘what’s on the mind, that’s on the way’),³⁴ meanwhile the construction *se sekavam na um* is not used in Macedonian.

A possible model for the second part may be the Albanian construction *mbaj (në) mend* ‘remember’ (lit. ‘keep in mind’) with *në* matched to a phonetically similar Slavic preposition *na*. This kind of match is not something really impossible in Slavic idioms of Albania, compare the use of *dur na* with the meaning ‘until’ (9) with the Albanian translation (9a):

9. *Ža sjéd-a dur na kraj mjésec-o*

Fut stay-Praes.1Sg before on end month.Def

[I] will stay until the end of the month (Boboštica, September 2010, female, born in 1937)

9a. ...*deri në fund të muaj-it*

until in end Agr month-Gen.Def

If this be true, the construction in 6 is an interlingual hybrid: its first part is an Albanian word influenced by the respective Macedonian construction, and its second part is a Macedonian prepositional phrase, formed as a calque of an Albanian construction:

se sekavam > kujtohem

mbaj në mend > (---) na um

verb of second conjugation is attested in both numbers and all persons; thirdly, several forms provided there are apparently slips of tongue (*mije ne znáje* – p. 111) or are probably misrepresented (*kóga vléze demokracíjava se túrna i téja, i téja obéte* ‘when the democracy entered.Praet.3Sg they were-removed.Praet.3Pl, both of them were-removed.Praet.3Pl’ that is showed as an illustration for//used to exemplify Praes.3Sg). With regard to several examples given in the monograph the lack of the necessary context seems problematic so that we cannot determine which form is used.

Here is the list of examples for 2Sg for the verbs with stems in *-e*: *áma i znáješ zaš, se rástet vo sred cvek’in’ata* (Gjinovec), *i éden arsimtár, Zýlfo Hasáni, go znáješ ti* (Gjinovec), *ti zášto me prášveš šk’ip* (Klenja), *so dva da káneše čerepnata, da te iskíneše, kreváeš ti sáčot* (Lejčan), *a znáeš istoríja ta za séloto* (Ostreni i Madh) – Ibidem.

³⁴ Examples from Murgoski 2005.

=> *kujtoheš na um*

Another interesting feature that I attribute to Albanian influence is the use of the perfect tense instead of aorist. With respect to perfect, forms in the general Golloborda dialect have a Western Macedonian outlook (Sobolev, Novik 2013: 55), differentiating between the following types of forms:

1) declinable ‘to be’ + active past L-participle of the main verb (*ja sum 'odel s 'ofci, koprat'ivata. i.; sum p'asel 'ofcite, i m'olzi i d'avaɹ go t'amu*);

2) declinable ‘to have’ + passive past participle of the main (transitive) verb in non-personal form (*ot k'e 'ofci go 'imat z'edeno*);

3) declinable ‘to have’ + passive past participle of the main (intransitive) verb in non-personal form (*gorčm'an 'ikot. što gl'itat, što se r'an 'it braɹ, što se 'imat r'anato j'areto*);

4) declinable ‘to be’ + passive past participle of the main intransitive verb that agrees with the subject (“*jas sum v'iden ja, 'ama vo g'osti vo t'etovo, vo p'azar*”). It mainly corresponds to Standard Macedonian, except that in the dialect the verbs *imam* ‘have’ and *sum* ‘be’ can also be used as main verbs.

There is also grammaticalised evidentiality in the dialect (with synthetic past for direct evidentials and so-called perfect-based *l*-forms for indirect evidentials³⁵).

In the excerpt from an interview in Appendix 2 it is obvious that *have*-perfect (number 2 in A. Sobolev’s classification) is occasionally used instead of aorist. The statistics for 29 forms in the excerpt is the following:

- *imam*-perfect (declinable ‘to have’ + passive past participle of the main (transitive) verb in non-personal form) – 11 cases (see the numeration in the Appendix: 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19);
- synthetic past (aorist and imperfect) – 8 forms (1, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28,³⁶ 29);
- declinable ‘to be’ + passive past participle – 8 forms (2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 20, 22, 24), from which
 - 2 are transitive (2, 5), hence these are mere present passive constructions;
 - 4 are intransitive (3, 4, 22, 24);

³⁵ A. Sobolev uses the term *status* that labels a category with the opposition of trustworthy (witnessed) and untrustworthy (non-witnessed) forms, the second having the following subcategorial meanings: admirative, renarrative and dubitative – Sobolev, Novik 2013: 56.

³⁶ The form *zǵedhe* seems to be a contamination from Slavic *zede* ‘take.Aor.3sg’ and Albanian *zgjedh* ‘to choose’ based on their phonetic similarity.

– for (8, 20) it is impossible to say whether they are transitive or intransitive, cf. possible English translations for (8): ‘that war was started’ (transitive) or ‘that war started’ (intransitive); (20): ‘were settled’ (transitive) vs. ‘settled’ (intransitive);

- one form (13) seems unfinished (it consists only from passive participle and the sentence lacks predication);
- one form (14) is indirect evidential.

The form *imali* (14) is the only indirect evidential in the text, while the text is, strictly speaking, based on unwitnessed information. However, forms (1, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29) can be considered as general truth that does not require indirect evidential marking, while other forms (21, 23) are witnessed.

It is clear that *imam*-perfect in the text is not used as resultative, but rather as one of the narrative tenses. To some extent it corresponds to the situation in Albanian where the use of perfect is quite often in cases that otherwise require aorist/perfect (see Domi 2002: 313; Pěrnaska 1982: 141, 143, 148; Асенова 2002: 252-253). In the Albanian speech in Tirana it is encountered quite often.³⁷ At the same we cannot speak about only displacement of aorist/imperfect by perfect and it seems that the situation is more complicated. In the example, the structure of the text has certain influence on the *imam*-perfect. The fragment about one of the cousins and the priests (6-20) is almost exclusively narrated in the *imam*-perfect, while in the part about the second cousin (21-29) this form is never used. This interplay of forms may be related to varying degrees of distancing of the speaker.

I hope to have shown several phenomena that take place in the Slavic idioms in Albania and have to do with linguistic identity and linguistic management. The influence of Albanian can be witnessed only on the grammar level (the category of number seems to be the most influenced in both idioms), but can also be traced in interlingual hybrids that include fused elements of both Albanian and Slavic. At the same time, the role of respective standard Slavic languages is important and they are used as a source of several forms that may be described as “linguistic symbols” referring to corresponding languages. The choice of forms by the speakers of Slavic (language management) reflects their linguistic identity that is represented

³⁷ O. Buchholz and W. Fiedler write about north-eastern Gheg dialectal zone – Buchholz & Fiedler 1986: 130, thus locating it quite far from Golloborda and even more so from Elbasan. However, the use of perfect instead of aorist (and imperfect) is quite frequent in Tirana and Elbasan even in the speech of well educated Albanian speakers.

as a series of choices between certain forms some of them consider as more accurate markers of their desired language identity.

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Key words: Slavic dialectology, Slavic dialects of Albania, Slavic and Albanian language contacts, Balkan Sprachbund, Critical Discourse Analysis

Resume: The article dwells upon linguistic identity reflected in the linguistic management of two Slavic-speaking groups in Albania: the descendants of migrants from Sandžak (now in the Republic of Serbia) in Fier and the vicinity and the recent migrants from Golloborda in Elbasan. These groups were not previously described in the literature. The choice of the forms by the informants reflects two contrary processes: Albanian influence over their Slavic and the desire to represent their idiom as close to a preferred “umbrella” Standard language.

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Appendix 1. Serbian dialect of Rreth Libofsha

Speakers: ED – male, born in 1968 in Rreth Libofsha, second generation after the migration; MM – Maxim Makartsev³⁸.

ED: Onī, stāri mōji su dōšli nā dvājset četiri, kād_je_bilo drūga rāta.

MM: Iljadu devetsto dvajset četiri?

ED: Takò. Òni su dōšli i su_bīlī, i_su_šili da pùtuju za_Túrsko, jèsu dōšli u_Grčko, jèsu dōšli u_Albàniju, i_u_Albàniju sù se_zatvorīle gra... zatvorīla se granīca. Krālǰ Zōgu nīje i_dào da_se_vrātu nà_svoje mèsto. I_od_dvājset četiri mī žìvimo u Albàniju.

MM: Zašto su rešili da pođu u Tursko iz Srbije?

ED: Jā tō nè_znam, jèsu sèli... tō_je_bila rāta, dà... tō da_spàsti glāvu. Sāmo za_tò.

MM: Došli su iz Srbije, ali od kojeg mesta?

ED: Òni mōji su_dōšli od_Senīce, od_Stāre Rāške.

MM: Senica?

ED: Sēnica.

MM: To je u blizini Novog Pazara, je l'?

ED: Òpština od_Nòvi Pàzar je Senīca.

MM: I koliko je bilo ovih Srba što su došli? Od prilike.

ED: Od prilike mī s... sād_što_smo u_òpštinu, u_grād Fīru, jèsmo nājviše od dvije hiljade pètstòtine dušā. Nājvišē.

MM: Ovde u Fieru?

ED: Òvde u Fierū. A_u, a u_sèlo dže žìvīm jā jesmò stò i dvanaès kûca, štò_su stò po_stò Sřbi.

³⁸ I am grateful to Anita Crnčić (University of Zagreb) who helped me to provide proper accentuation basing on the recording.

Appendix 2. The idiom of Muslim Slavs from Golloborda in Elbasan

Speakers: H – male, born around 1965 in Trebisht; MM – Maxim Makartsev. The numeration is provided for past forms (as well as passive present, see the discussion in the article). Aorist and imperfect are in italics, *imam*-perfect is in bold.

H: Óva na četríeset i éna, i dve godínata, kóa *póčna* (1) vtórata bórba vo Evrópa. Túka óvie míe káko što smje ródneni (2) túka, što smje bídeni (3) záenu, nie niéto (?) túka ímane... sme ímani (4) okólu téa čárkvata. I čárkvata e izgrádena (5) vo níva náša, óvo ja pámtim mnógu. Vo sedúmdeset i šest³⁹ gódina támu **íma šétano** (6) i **íma žívno** (7) soj, bratučédot. Rázbiraš? I kóa e póčnata (8) téa borbata, **íma** póna... **pomínato** (9) po pátot vójna, zášto i vórvit pátot Strúga-Debar. Pátot Strúga-Débar, što se vórzet. Po pátot **íma pomínato** (10) vójna, albánska, šárpka, amá so dzvézda. He, he, **ímae réčeno** (11) óvie, “štom vórvit dzvézda, túe tée mésto némat áir, né e, né e dóbro za tée mesto”. Rázbiraš? Štom vórvit dzvézda, socijalízmot demék ká idet. I némat áir. I tíje **ímet prodádeno** (12) svje, túe što ímani (13), vóloi si ímali (14) mnógu tie, ófci, vóloi, kónji, sve.

MM: Popojte?

H: Popójte. **Ímat prodádeno** (15) tíe. **Ímat zédeno** (16) i... tátko mu od ovója, stríko, **ímat zédeno** (17) dva vóla za óranje. **Ímat kúpeno** (18), ód nimi ófci **ímat kúpeno** (19), ód nimi tie... Ottúka se naséleni (20) vo, vo Dúräs, vo Šíjak íli vo, ee, Sukth. Káko što mi se kážvet, ímam éden drúgi bratučéd, i toj *béše* (21) star, toj ésti úmren (22) v Dúräs, i toj pojke *ímaše* (23) interésot zášto e... séga na demokratíjava toj e bíden (24) tamo. Zóšto e vo, mésto makédonski ésti, a? Na gránica so... Záš zémjata náše ja *zéde* (25) Makedónija. Štom *se kláde* (26) na četríeset i šest, i pet godínata, *se kláde* (27) gránicata i zémjata nam ni a *zgedhe* (28), na Dríma, Dríma, kaj Drímot túeku. I *ostána* (29) vo Makedónija.

Table 1. The ethnoconfessional division of the village of Rreth Libofsha

Name of the quarter	Muslim Slavs	Muslim Albanians (Çam and Tosk)	Orthodox Albanians	Ortodox Vlah	Note
Çiplakë	–	+	–	–	the village graveyard is located there

³⁹ This is yet another illustration for the use of cardinal numbers instead of ordinal that was discussed with the respect to the speech of Muslim Slavs in Fier and Boboshtica dialect.

					(Orthodox and Muslim)
Rruga e Duleviçëve	+	-	+	-	
Lagja e Çobanëve	-	-	-	+	the church Stan (sic) Manastir
Rruga Libofsha	+	+	-	-	Muslim Slavs live along one side of the street and Albanians along the other
fshati Kolkonas	-	-	+	-	only Orthodox Albanians; 5 houses in total; Orthodox graveyard and St. Cosmas church