

BULGARIAN INDIRECT SPEECH VERBAL FORMS AND THE CIRCUMPONTIC SUBSTRATUM

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Indirect speech verbal forms (преисказната форма) have traditionally been a major problem for whoever studies Bulgarian at both theoretical and practical levels. Such verbal forms do not exist in Old Church Slavonic or in other contemporary Slavic languages. Their basic function is to stress the fact that the speaker did not witness the events that he is telling, i.e. a nuance of uncertainty e.g.

а) Аз видях че Милена се върна по-рано.
"I saw that Milena came back earlier".

б) Той каза че Милена се върнала по-рано.
"He said that Milena came back earlier".

In case (a) the aorist се върна indicates that the speaker witnessed the action, while in case (b) the indirect speech form of the aorist indicates that he knew about by indirect means. Bulgarian indirect speech verbal forms are relatively rich and able to render various nuances of tense. Anyway, we should notice that they fail to convey the nuance of anteriority. Thus, to seven forms of indicative correspond only four forms of indirect speech.

Indicative form

Present	Той пише	He writes
Imperfect	Той пишеше	He was writing
Aorist	Той писа	He wrote
Future	Той ще пише	He will write
Future in the past	Той щял да пише	He was going to write
Past indefinite	Той писал е	He has written
Pluperfect	Той беше писал	He had written

Indirect speech form

→ Той пишел
→ Той пишел
→ Той писал
→ Той щял да пише
→ Той щял да пише
→ Той писал бил
→ Той писал бил

It has become a common place to attribute such phenomenon to an influence from Turkish. It is not the intention of the author to deny the great influence of Turkish upon Balkanic languages. Such an influence was clearly exerted upon the lexis of Bulgarian. Words such as харч (expense), хазна (public treasure), пара (money), чорап (sock) etc. are Turkish. However, it is very unlikely that a syntactical feature in Bulgarian can be attributed to Turkish influence. As a matter of fact, the influences from an adstratum language are usually found at the level of lexis. Influences on morphology, phonetics and syntax are usually rare and limited to those cases of massive and prolonged bilingualism associated with a strong mingle of population. That has not been the case of

Bulgaria. If an important syntactical feature, such as indirect speech verbal forms, were borrowed from Turkish, then we should expect that other elements of Turkish syntax were borrowed as well. This does not seem to happen. Turkish left branching has not affected Bulgarian syntax. Gender agreement in Bulgarian is as strong as it was in Old Church Slavonic, though it does not exist in Turkish. The usage of conjunctions shows no signs of decline. Have you heard of postpositions instead of prepositions in Bulgarian? I guess you have not.

Indeed, there is a so-called subjective past tense (miş'li rivayat geçmiş zaman) in Turkish which, basically, shares some functions of the Bulgarian indirect speech form e.g.

Emir bey kaza yapmış. (It seems that) Emir bey had
(made) an accident.
Cf. Emir bey kaza yaptı Emir bey had (made) an
accident.

Such verbal forms exist in other Turkic languages as well. In Kazakh the so-called first participle (көсемшүс I) has the same functions as the subjective past tense in Turkish.

Данияр Мәскеуден келінті. (It seems that) Danyar
came from Moscow.
Cf. Данияр Мәскеуден келді. Danyar came from
Moscow.

Most researchers seem very happy with the idea that one single main feature of Turkish syntax was borrowed by Bulgarian while all others were not. In the opinion of the author of this article it would be much wiser to look for the origins of this phenomenon not in the *adstratum* but in the *substratum*, which probably is the source of most oddities in the syntax of Balkanic languages. Of course, as a sustainer of the concept of the Circumpontic *Sprachbund* I shall propose a new hypothesis and namely, that Bulgarian indirect speech verbal forms belong to the pre-Indo-European *substratum* of Circumpontic languages. Where do I propose to start our linguistical excavations? In Georgian, a language that, like most Caucasian languages, is supposed to have settled in the area from immemorial times, long before Indo-European and Turkish migrations.

The first screeve¹ of the third series of Georgian verbs is the so-called First Resultative of the verb (პირველი თურმეობითი /pirveli turmeobiti/). The First Resultative has three main functions:

1) Wonder

"შენი ოჯახის პატრონი და მოჯამაგირედ დადნომა ვის გაუგონია! ან შენ ვერ გაგიგია, რა გინდა, ან მე არ მესმის, რას ამბობ" /šeni ožaxis paṭroni da možamagired dadnoma vis gaugonia! an šen ver gagigia, ra ginda, an me ar mesmis, ras ambob/ "That you are the chief of the family and behave like a servant! Who has heard something like that?! Either you have not understood what you want or I do not understand what you want." (Ilie Tchavtchavadze)

2) An action that the speaker did not witness.

a) ვიღამაც მეუე მოკლა /viyamac mere mokla/ Someone killed the king.

b) ვიღამაც მეუე მოუკლავს /viyamac mere mouklavs / (It seems that) Someone killed the king.

3) Inferred action (presumption)

ვანომ მოსაწვევი ბარათი მიუღია /vanom mosaçvevi barati miuγia/ Vano (probably) received the invitation.

In case (a), by using the aorist, the speaker asserts with certainty that someone killed the king, while in case (b) the usage of the First Resultative makes us think that the speaker heard about it.

Let us continue our excavations in another linguistic site, Albanian, the descendant of Thracian or Illyrian. In Albanian the admirative form of the verb has two main functions:

1) Admiration, wonder (a positive or negative emotion towards something).

Sa bukur folke shqip! How beautiful you speak Albanian!

S'pasje bërë gjë gjatë mungesës sime! You have done nothing during my absence.

2) Indirect speech (with a nuance of distrust).

"I thanë se papu paskësh marrë mēri me të për shkak të atij laços, të birit, Naumit." "They told him that dad began to hate him because of that stupid, his son, Naum" (from *Novela* by J. Xoxa).

The admirative has the following tenses in Albanian.

Present	punuakam	I work!, I supposedly work.
Imperfect	punuakësh	I was working!, I was supposedly working.
Aorist	paskam punuar	I worked!, I supposedly worked.
Pluperfect	paskësh	I had worked!, I had supposedly worked.

It is time to specify that the so-called indirect speech verbal forms in Bulgarian may also function as admirative forms e.g. "Обръщам се към бай Ганю... Боже! Какво виждам! Бай Ганю се съблякъл мо ръкави и си разкопча жилетката..." "I turned to Bay Ganya and... God! What do I see?! Bay Ganya took his jacket off and unbuttoned his vest!" (Aleko Konstantinov). This means that, basically, the indirect speech forms of Bulgarian and the admirative tenses of Albanian are quite the same thing. The only difference is that the Albanian admirative is not compulsory when rendering indirect speech. It is used to stress the speaker's distrust towards the words he is repeating. This gives us the right to speak about a Balkanic syntactic feature, common to

two Balkanic languages and by no means about Turkish influence on Bulgarian.

In my opinion, the traditional view of Bulgarian indirect speech forms as a syntactical borrowing from Turkish is absolutely anachronic. Such explanations belong to an early period of linguistics when all facts of "little languages" had to be explained through facts of more "prestigious" languages. Such approaches do nothing but delay the progress of science, fact that results even more painful at the beginning of the third millennium.

I consider to have demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that:

a) The fact that indirect speech verbal forms exist in Turkic languages does not mean that they cannot exist in other tongues and that they have appeared under Turkish influence. Such forms exist as we have seen in Georgian, Albanian and Bulgarian. In addition to that, they exist also in German (Konjunktiv I) *Er sagte daß seine Mutter krank sei* (He said that his mother is sick). Thus, the fact that certain verbal forms exist in Turkish is by no means a demonstration that verbal forms with similar nuances from neighbouring languages come from Turkish.

b) Albanian admirative, Bulgarian indirect speech forms and Georgian First Resultative, have very similar usages. Diverging terminology stresses the nuance that predominates in each of the three languages. In order to achieve coherence we should make use of one single term for all these verbal forms. I propose to call it *diffidential mood* (from Latin *diffidentia*: distrust)

c) Georgian, Albanian and Bulgarian *diffidential mood* have a two-fold basic nuance: surprising action and unwitnessed action, while their Turkic counterparts

convey only the latter nuance. This is a major difference.

d) We can assert that the *diffidential mood* is a Balkanic feature, common to two Balkanic languages, Bulgarian and Albanian. It should be included to the list of characteristics common to the languages of the Balkanic *Sprachbund*.

e) The *diffidential mood* is also a Circumpontic feature, as we can also find it in Georgian. It is one more argument that supports the existence of the Circumpontic *Sprachbund*.

On the basis of these conclusions we could also propose that:

a) The presence of *diffidential mood* in Georgian is an indication that it could be of pre-Indo-European origin. This would also indicate that at least one of the languages spoken in the Circumpontic area before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans was typologically Caucasian.

b) Romanian *presumptive forms* might be a narrow manifestation of the *diffidential mood* as well. Let us not forget that one of the nuances of the Georgian First Resultative is "inferred action" (presumption). There are two presumptive verbal forms in Romanian:

Present	Fratele meu o fi dormind.	My brother is (probably) sleeping.
Past	Copilul o fi mers la şcoală	The child (probably) went to school.

c) If *diffidential mood* existed in the pre-Indo-European substratum of Paleo-Balkanic tongues and still exists today in Modern Balkanic languages, then it had to exist in Palco-Balkanic languages as well. This means that Thracian, Dacian and Illyrian may have had a *diffidential mood*.

NOTES

1. Each 'conjugational pattern' in Georgian represents a unique combination of tense, aspect, mood and 'status', and is known as a screeve. This word was coined from the Georgian term მწკრივი /mçk.rivi/ ('row') to avoid using the label 'tense' with its strong temporal connotations. A screeve consists of the pattern of verb forms for each person and number (cf. Latin *amo*,

amas, *amat*, etc.). There are eleven screeves in Georgian, grouped into three series (see table below). Series 1 (S1) (the 'present series') has two subseries ('present' and 'future'), each with three screeves. Series 2 (S2) (the 'aorist series') has two screeves, while Series 3 (S3) (the 'perfect series') has three, although the perfect subjunctive is now obsolescent. (Hillery 1999, p.21.)

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