

Towards a typological classification of the syntax of Paleo-Balkan languages

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Whoever works in the field of Balkanic studies is familiar with the term of Linguistic Union. The concept of Linguistic Union is, in some way, the orphan of Linguistics, unrecognised by many, disregarded by others, considered in the best case as an auxiliary source of information. On the other hand, we have the Families of Languages. That source is considered as reliable because it can be used to reconstruct the external appearance of the proto-language.

The secondary place assigned to Linguistic Unions is due to the misunderstanding of the kind of information that it supplies. First of all let us examine the process of linguistic imposition and assimilation. As a result of the political, economic, and cultural pressure, a group of population is compelled to assimilate the language of another. That population will pass through a period of bilingualism and, if that "linguistic pressure" continues, they will finally abandon their original language and will keep and develop only that one imposed on them. Of course, a population may easily borrow lexis and morphology, but it is much harder to borrow phonology, that depends on the configuration of articulatory organs, and syntax, which reflects deeper structures of thinking. Grosso modo, we may assert that, within a language, stratum element will mainly define lexis and morphology, while substratum element will be present especially in phonology and syntax. So, accepting that the information offered by Families of Languages and Linguistic Unions is different qualitatively but not quantitatively, I will renounce both terms, adopting instead those of "Stratic Group of Languages" and "Substratic Group of Languages". We may say that some languages form a Stratic Group when they have same stratum superposed on several substrata, e.g. Romance languages. We will say that some languages form a Substratic Group when they have a common substratum, on which several strata were superposed. This is the case of Balkanic languages. On the base of Stratic Groups we may reconstruct mainly the lexis and morphology of the stratum language. From the Substratic Groups we may

infer mainly the syntax and the phonology of the substratum language.

It is at this point where I will get into the real subject of this work: Syntax reconstruction and, on the base of it, psycho-social reconstruction, because logical structures of a language reflect psychic patterns of a society.

In a previous work I classified languages according to the way they express the possessive sentences. I found two basic types: one that uses a transitive verb. For instance, English, where we have sentences like "I have a book", i.e. using the transitive verb "to have". The other type, more archaic, is that where possession is rendered by a copulative verb "to be". In such sentences the possessor (and sometimes the possessed object too) uses a preposition or case that shows the idea of proximity. For example: In Russian *y menja est' kniga*, in Latin "Mihi liber est", in Hebrew *li yesh seter*. They all mean, in fact "to me a book is". I sustained in that work that the be- structures, which underline the idea of proximity represents an early stage of social development where possession is still linked to proximity, i.e. "I possess something because I am there to defend it" or "If I leave something that means I give it up". The other type, the one which uses a transitive verb, the have-structures appeared at a more advanced level of social development, when, after adopting a sedentary way of life, society regarded property as a matter of consensus or agreement of all members of a social group. In other words, "I possess something because everybody agrees that it is mine and I do not need to stay near it with a stick in my hand".

I said before that the syntax and the logic structures of a language maybe mainly a contribution of the substratum. This means that from the logical structures of the languages of a Substratic group, we can infer the logical structures of a Substratum Language. So let us try to use this approach in the case of the possessive structures of the Balkanic Substratic Group.

In Romanian, besides the have-structure, i.e. besides the usage of the transitive verb "a avea", we will still find some remains of the more archaic be-structure. For

instance: "Mi-e dor", Mi-e milă" ("to me is melancholy, to me is pity") or to a smaller extent sentences like "Stomacul mi-e gol" ("to me the stomach is empty"). These linguistic facts seem to point to the existence of an earlier *be*-possessive structure. Surely such a structure could also be explained through the Latin construction "Mihi est...", but, let us not forget that in, Vulgar Latin, sentences with the transitive verb "habeo" were almost generalized. In Bulgarian and Albanian there are few traces of the *be*-possessive structures. Just if we assume that the usage of dative instead of genitive might be a relic of a possessive sentence of the kind of "Mihi est...", then, in that case, we might observe that, in Bulgarian, besides the form МОЯТА КЪЩА there is also a shorter and more colloquial form КЪЩАТА МИ, where "МИ" is, in fact, a dative clitic. We may observe the same phenomenon in Romanian, where, in an older style, the dative pronouns might replace the possessive ones e.g. "casa-mi" instead of "casa mea". In Albanian we will not find even that much. Just, maybe, phrases like: "i baba", "e ema", "të prindërit" ("his father, his mother, his parents") could be a vestige of possessive dative. If that were true "e ema" of originally "i ema". "i" passed to "e", by analogy with the conjunctive article, when Albanians did not perceive it anymore as a dative personal pronoun. But a more convincing and clearer argument in favour of the existence of possessive dative in Albanian is the almost total coincidence between genitive and dative in noun declension, distinguished only by the presence in the genitive of the conjunctive article "i, e, të, së") e.g. "motrës" (to the sister) and "i motrës" ("of the sister"). In any case remains of "to be" possessive structures in Balkanic languages are very few. That makes me think that by the time the Romans and the Slavs imposed their respective languages, the Paleo-Balkanic languages had already developed "to have" transitive possessive structures, which implies that Paleo-Balkanic population already had an evolved concept of property rather by social agreement than by proximity and force. This arguments confirm that they had adopted a sedentary way of life a long time before arrival of the Romans and the Slavs. The fact that Romanian keeps some clear traces of *be* possessive structures makes me think that Dacians kept this kind of linguistic structures for a longer time than their southern neighbours. Probably, this linguistic delay was just the reflex of a social delay, of a slower development of the property concept. That situation maybe explained by the pressure that migratory peoples exerted on Dacians. The existence of possessive dative in Romanian and Bulgarian, and maybe even in

Albanian suggests me that possessive dative might have existed in Paleo-Balkanic languages too, and that may be the early Paleo-Balkanic *be* possessive sentences marked the possessor with a dative.

In another work of mine (now in print), I classified syntactic structures of languages in two main groups: concentric and sequential. Sequential are those where subordination is achieved by means of relative pronouns and conjunctions. Concentric are those where subordination is produced by participles and gerunds. Sequential structures present the main clause and the secondary clauses as a chain where the linking elements are the relative pronouns and the conjunctions, e.g. "The people, who are sitting here, will go back home after they have attended this congress" If you replace the relative pronouns by personal and erase the temporal conjunction, you will get a sequence of independent clauses. Concentric structures present the complex sentence in the following way: Main clause is treated as a simple sentence. Subordinate clauses are treated as constitutive elements of the main clause. For instance, the example given above rendered concentrically will look thus: "Having attended this congress, the people sitting here will go back home". Here the relative subordinate is treated as a determinant of the main clause element that it refers to. This syntactic operation, that required the usage of an active present participle, can be clearly seen if we will ask: "Which people?" and will answer: "the people sitting here". The temporal, causal and space subordinates are rendered by gerunds and function as adverbs, as circumstantial complements of the main clause. In this concrete case the subordinate "having attended this congress" is treated as a circumstantial complement which could answer the question "How will the people sitting here go back home?".

Concentric structures aim to create one single unitary clause, composed of complex elements. It is an expression of unitary thought. Sequential structures try to create a chain of simple clauses. It is a manifestation of linear thought. Concentric structures are older, since we find them more often in dead languages (like Latin, Old Greek, Sanskrit a.s.o.), conservative languages (Mongolian for instance), literary styles, which usually reflect an earlier stage of the language, considered classic, old texts a.s.o. The transition from concentric to sequential structures takes place when thoughts become too long and complex and generate, by consequence, long and heavy concentric periods. At that moment there is a crisis and the transition is produced.

Now, from that standpoint, let us consider the

situation of the Balkanic Languages. We will examine first the evolution of concentric structuring devices, i.e. the participles, infinitives and gerunds.

Romanian is rich in impersonal verbal forms, having:

2 infinitives (present and past) "a face" "a fi făcut"
2 present gerunds (active and passive) "făcând"
"fiind făcut"

a past passive participle "făcător"
a so-called supine "de făcut"

a possibly substratum-originated fossilized gerund in "-ș" "târâș" from "a târâi", "furiș" from "a fura" and later used as a *nomina agentis* (i.e. a kind of present active participle) "plutaș", "arcaș".

Bulgarian offers a big variety of impersonal verbal forms:

an active present participle "правещ"
a passive present participle "правим"
an active imperfect past participle "правел"
an active perfect past participle "правил"
2 passive past participles "направен" (perfect) and "правен" (imperfect)
a gerund "правейки"

Here it is interesting to mark that modern Bulgarian has two more participles than Church Slavonic, that because modern Bulgarian distinguishes the aspect of past participles.

Modern Albanian offers us a poorer picture; as far as it concerns the participles, on the other hand, it has a rich system of gerunds:

a present active gerund "duke bërë"
a present passive gerund "duke u bërë"
two past active gerunds "duke pasë bërë" and "me të bërë"
two past passive gerunds "duke qenë bërë" and "me t'u bërë"

Nowadays the participles in /-r/ are both, active and passive, present and past, but I think that originally its usage was restricted to the past passive participle. Verbal derivatives with a sense of present active participle are obtained by adding the suffixes /-s/, /-tor/, /-or/, /-tar/ and /-ar/ e.g. *mësues* "teacher", *luftëtar* "fighter", *vepror* "active". From these endings the one in /-s/ is especially productive. I think that one was the old present active participle, the others in /-tor/ and /-tar/, I think they were *nomina agentis*. The ending /-shëm/ added to verb stems produces a present passive

participle e.g. in *pijshëm* "drinkable". Probably, not a very long time ago the Albanian system of participles looked thus:

present active participle "mësues"
present passive participle "i mësueshëm"
past passive participle "i mësuar"

This system was gradually simplified until the past passive participle in /-r/ remained as the only participle in Albanian.

The richness of impersonal verbal forms manifest in Balkanic languages make me think that Paleo-Balkan languages were also rich in such verbal forms and, by consequence, in concentric structures, just like Latin or Greek.

Now we will examine the development of relative pronouns in order to have a more complete picture of the Balkanic subordination system. In Romanian the relative pronouns are: "ce" and "care". In older forms of Romanian the latter pronoun was "carele". In Bulgarian we have one single relative pronoun "който". In Albanian we have two: "që" and "i cili". The origin of "që" is unclear and might be linked to Latin "que" and Sanskrit "क्व". In the relative pronouns of these three languages we find some constants. They are all binary, composed of two elements: Older Romanian "carele", Bulgarian "който", Albanian "i cili". One of the two elements is an interrogative adjective that corresponds to the English "which", the other one is an article. If we consider that articles were originally demonstrative pronouns (this is valid for Indo-European, Semitic, Caucasian and other families of languages), we will realize that these Balkanic relative pronouns are in fact correlative pronouns, as is Sanskrit (yah, sah) or in Russian "той", "который" a.s.o. Correlative pronouns are, in fact, the embryonic stage of relative pronouns.

In conclusion: At the time when Romans and Slavs superimposed their languages on the Paleo-Balkan substratum, Paleo-Balkan languages used mainly concentric syntactic structures, rich in participles and gerunds. By that same time, a system of relative pronouns was at its embryonic stage. That means that sequential syntactic structures were at an embryonic stage too. Probably, that was also the time of the structural crisis and the process of transition of Paleo-Balkan Languages from the concentric syntax to the sequential, and maybe from the unitary thought to the linear one.

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