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### On certain phonetic balkanisms

The structural similarities between the languages which belong to different families and which are spoken in the Balkan Peninsula were indicated by scholars already in the 19th century (J. B. Kopitar, F. Miklosich), but the concept of Balkan linguistics (*linguistique balkanique*) was originally introduced by K. Sandfeld (1926/1930), and the expression *Balkan Sprachbund* was used by N. Trubetzkoy (1928: 20). Since that time, the term *Balkan Sprachbund* gained currency in English-language publications (and in publications in other languages as well), whereas the term *balkańska liga językowa* was established in the Polish language. Z. Gołąb (1968: 264) considers isogrammatism, i.e. the identical structural model in one or two languages as the defining feature of every Sprachbund, according to whom morphemes are combined in morphological-syntactic units of a higher order. This phenomenon was illustrated on the basis of Macedonian-Aromanian structural convergences (1959), which also involve the remaining languages of the Balkan Sprachbund, and above all the Bulgarian language. The Balkan nature of this language was indicated by Professor Tadeusz Szymański on numerous occasions, especially in the works devoted to damascening and dialectal Bulgarian vocabulary.

As we know, apart from morpho-syntactic and lexical convergences, the languages of the Balkan Sprachbund also manifest certain phonetic similarities, which

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recently have been comprehensively studied by I. Sawicka (Sawicka/Sujecka 2015). In this context, a number of remarks were devoted to the central vowel, to which she refers as a “nasal schwa” (Sawicka/Sujecka 2015: 128–131). We are concerned with a vowel which is represented in Bulgarian orthography as <ъ>, in Albanian (Tosk), in Romanias <â>, <î> with the central place of articulation, interpreted by other scholars as a reduced vowel, like the English [ə], or the so-called vocalic schwa in the Proto-Indo-European period. According to Sawicka, it emerged from a sequence of oral vowels. It obtained resonance due to the influence of the nasal consonant which followed it. Then it lost the resonance and it does not exist as an actual reduced nasal vowel in any of the relevant Balkan languages/dialects. One thing that is certain is that it is the common innovation of the previously mentioned languages, and she perceives its origins in the Bulgarian language (and in the regional Macedonian dialects), for this sound does not occur in the literary Macedonian language, in Greek and in north Albanian dialects.

The scholar considers the vacillation of consonantal groups *nt / nd / d* a peculiarity of Balkan phonetics (Sawicka/Sujecka 2015: 140–146). She associates this phenomenon with the lenition of intervocalic voiced stop consonants, which yielded spirants in all positions in Byzantine Greek. However, they were preserved after a nasal consonant (also in the syllable-onset) e.g. την πέτρα [tin<sub>̣</sub>bedra] ‘this rock’, στον τόπο [ston<sub>̣</sub>dopo] ‘in place’, στον κήπο [ston<sub>̣</sub>gipo] ‘in a garden’. These groups sometimes yield [b], [d], [g]. The earliest examples are drawn from the (ancient) Pamphylian dialect, e.g. πέντε > \*πενδε [modern pronunciation] > πεδε ‘five’; the endings of the 3rd person plural of the verb -αντι, -ωντι > -αδι, -οδι. This change has parallels in other languages of Asia Minor (Schwyzer 1939: 210), and a similar vacillation was attested in Thracian onomastics e.g. Δεντ/δου-, *Brinca/Bringa* (Matzinger 2016: 29). As we know, the change *-nt-* > *-nd-* occurred also in the Albanian language, np. *dhëndër* ‘son-in-law, fiancé’ < PIE \*gʷen(ə)ter-; also in the syllable-onset as a result of the aphaeresis of a vowel, e.g. *mbas* ‘behind’; ‘after’ < \*en-*apo-kʷid*, *ndej* ‘to extend’ < \*en-*tenja*, *nga* ‘whence’ < \*en-*ka-*. Intervocalic voiced stops underwent spirantic lenition (as in the Greek language), and then they disappeared already in the prehistorical period, e.g. *det* ‘sea’ < \**dheɸbeto-*, *be* ‘oath’ = Slav. *běda*, *dhi* ‘goat’ = German *Ziege*. Both processes also involved Latin borrowings in this language, e.g. *imperator* > *mbret* ‘king’, *inter* > *ndër* ‘under, between’, *angustus* > *ngushë* ‘narrow’; *bubulcus* > *bujk* ‘peasant’, *medicus* > *mjek* ‘medic’, *cogito* > *kujtoj* ‘I think’.

The still-active lenition of voiced occlusives (and spirants) occurs in west Macedonian dialects, e.g. *vodica* > *vojca*, *ponedelnik* > *poneelnik*, *gledaš* > *gleaš*, *seda* > *sejt*; *blagoslov* > *blaoslof*, *koga* > *koa*, *viĝat* > *viat*, *preĝeska* > *preeska*. The greatest number of examples is adduced by B. Vidoeski (2000: 69, 81, 98) from the region of Debar, Struga and Ohrid, but *-d-* also disappeared in almost the entire area of the southern periphery from Dramsko in the east to Bobošica in Albania, e.g. *gospodin* > *gospoin*, *gradina* > *granja*, *zavediš* > *zaveš*, *da-odiš* >

*da-oš* etc. (ibidem, 253). Intervocalic consonants also disappeared, especially in the Albanian borderland in western Macedonia, and this process is perceptible in 19th-century texts and Macedonian folklore in Albania and in Greece in the region of the lower course of the Vardar, where apart from *muva*, *suvo* we find *drugo* > *drujo*, *rogozina* > *rozina*, *sega* > *seja*, *sea*, *Bogorodica* > *Borodica*; *gospodin* > *gospoin*, *vidiš* > *viš*; *takovi* > *takoi*, *glava* > *glaa*, *tovar* > *toar* etc. (Mazon 1936: 46–50).

The development of nasal vowels in the dialects of Aegean Macedonia is associated with the vacillation of the group *nt* / *nd* / *d*. As was demonstrated by J. Duma (1991: 63–112), who used abundant material, nasal resonance, which disappeared in the literary Bulgarian and Macedonian language, was preserved mainly before a voiced stop consonant in the form of a nasal consonant, e.g. \**mōdrъ* > *mъndur*, \**pędъ* > *penda*, also with a secondary nasal consonant, e.g. *fambrika*, *Jungoslavija*, due to the Greek and Albanian influence, which was discussed in a comprehensive manner by I. Sawicka (1991: 113–124).

As another instance of phonetic Balkanism one should treat the change of intervocalic *-n-* into *-r-* in the literary (Tosk) Albanian language and in the history and ethnolects of the Romanian language, mainly in the Istro-Romanian and partly in the Daco-Romanian language (Bednarczuk 2021). According to the opinion of the majority of researchers, the change of *-n-* > *-r-* in the dialects of both languages shares common origins. However, the question about the source (centre of irradiation) and the course of this process remains unanswered. Discussion about problem has been summarized by G. R. Solta (1980: 182–184), who considered the change itself to be a phonetic Balkanism and he espoused the idea of the (pre-) Romanian origin of this process. However, a different opinion was expressed by A. Rosetti (1924; 1968: 246–249, 515–519), who rejected this relationship in both languages.

In Istro-Romanian the change of the Latin *-n-* > *-r-* is regular in nature, e.g. *anellus* > *arel* ‘ring’, *bonus* > *bur* ‘good’, *luna* > *lure* ‘moon’, *panem* (Acc.) > *para* ‘bread’ (Kovačec 1998; Filipi 2002–4). This ethnolect is said to be derived from the region of Prizren (southern Kosovo), and today it manifests certain links to northeastern dialects (Maramureș, Criș, Oltenia). Therefore, one may assume that the isophone *-n-* > *-r-* involved the speech of the ancestors of Albanian Tosks and Istro-Romanians and of those Daco-Romanians who reached the Maramureș region. This change occurred after the ancestors of the Daco-Romanian Wallachians and of the Albanian Ghegs broke away from the proto-Romanian-Albanian community. It seems that the transition *-n-* > *-r-* in Romanian is associated with the change *-l-* > *-r-* in the Romance context (Bourciez 1946: § 464), which apart from Romanian (e.g. Latin *malum* > *măr* ‘apple’, but *caballum* > *cal* ‘horse’) was attested in Italian dialects, e.g. in Liguria (already in Old Genoese, e.g. *filio* > *fir*, *scala* > *scara*, *volere* > *vorer*) and in other regions of northern Italy (Piemont, Novara, Ticino, Milano, Lucca, Elba), and in Calabria and with varying prevalence

in Sicily, in Campania and Lazio (Rohlf's 1966: 306–8). Therefore, one may conjecture that the rhotacism of an intervocalic *-l-* dates back to the period of Old Romance dialects.

As far as the change *-n-* > *-r-* in Daco-Romanian is concerned, it was widespread in the 16th and in the early 17th century in Maramureş and Transylvania, e.g. *lumiră/lumină* ‘light’, (“Catechismul românesc”, 1544, cf. Rosetti 1968: 516), and in the east it extended until Bukovina and Moldavia. However, it did not enter the literary Romanian language which developed in the 18th century in Wallachia. Until today examples of this change may be found in dialects west of the Bistrica River, e.g. *bire* < *bene*, and most numerous examples of this change are found in the Maramureş region and in the Apuseni mountains (southwest of Cluj). Hence according to W. Truszkowski (1992: 58–59) could have been brought by nomadic shepherds to the dialect of the village of Draguş near Braşov (Oltenia) that he described, e.g. *nimăruia*, the literary *nimănu* ‘to no-one’. As was observed by T. Papahagi (1925), in the Maramureş region at that time the forms with *-n-* were a peculiarity (archaism) of the speech of women and children, whereas men avoided them, even forming hypercorrect forms with *-n-* in the place of etymological forms with *-r-*, e.g. *muşuroi* > *muşunoi* ‘anthill’, *usturoi* > *ustunoi* ‘garlic’, etc.

The change *-n-* > *-r-* in the Tosk Albanian dialect has been the object of scholarly attention for many years, and its similarity to new Celtic dialects has been indicated by H. Pedersen (1909: 152–155), who also mentioned Romanian (*ibidem* 141). This scholar claimed that lenited *-n-*, mainly after a consonant, changed into *-r-* in northern Irish dialects, e.g. *gnaoi* [gr̥i] ‘beauty’, [Old Irish] *cnú* [kr̥u] ‘nut’ [Modern Irish: *cnó*], *tnúth* [tr̥u] ‘desire’, *mná* [mr̥a] ‘woman’, in Scottish Gaelic *cnó* [kro], *mnaoi* [mr̥ui] (pl.), Manx *cro*, *mraane*; similarly in Breton, e.g. Middle Breton *cnouenn* > New/Modern Breton *kraouenn* ‘nut’, *tnou* > *traouñ* ‘valley’.

Tosk rhotacism has been explored by distinguished researchers of the Albanian language, who accounted for it in the majority of cases in the native context (Çabej 1976: 132–134; Demiraj 1988: 236–239, 303; Desnickaja 1968: 42–44). Research that has been conducted until today has indicated that in Proto-Tosk words inherited from the Proto-Indo-European saw a change e.g. Ghëg *dimën* / Tosk *dimër* ‘winter’ and Latin borrowings, e.g. *venë* / *verë* < *vinum*, *krishtenë* / *krishterë* < *christianus*, and the oldest Greek ones, e.g. *mokën* / *mokër* ‘millstone’ < *μηχανή* ‘instrument’. However, this change involved neither Slavic borrowings (from the 7th c.), e.g. *sanë* ‘hay’ < *\*sěno*, *zakon* ‘custom’ < *\*zakonь* ‘law’, nor the more recent Greek ones, e.g. *tigan* ‘frying pan’ < *τήγανον* and Turkish ones, e.g. *bina* ‘building’ < *bina*. The change happened before the disappearance of the non-accented final vowel. The Tosk change *-n-* > *-r-* has been recently discussed in a dissertation by K. Albany (2015), whose author also espouses the idea of the native origin of the change *-n-* > *-r-* (he does not mention Romanian), and he aptly refers to the process itself as “lenition”.

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## Summary

### On certain phonetic balkanisms

The focus of this article is the origins of (1) reduced vowels in languages of the Balkan Sprachbund, (2) lenition of soft stops, (3) its (pre)nasalization, (4) the change of *-n-* into *-r-* in the Tosk dialect of Albanian and a similar process in Old Romanian as well as the Istro-Romanian, Maramuresh and Oltenian dialects of this language, a parallel change of Latin *-l-* into *-r-* in common Romanian and certain Italian dialects.

**Keywords:** Albanian, Romanian, dialects, phonetic changes, lenition, (pre)nasalization, rhotacism.