Language Contacts and Names:The current situation in Macedonian Onomastics

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Abstract

The most difficult and most sensitive issue in onomastics is the question of name's genealogy in the context of language contacts. I would therefore like to indicate two phenomena typical of the onomastic system. 1. Language, the most efficient means of communication, is founded on two basic principles: (*a*) on the *principle of the lexical system* as an open system, and (*b*) on the *principle of the grammatical system* as a closed system. 2. The language of names, as opposed to the appellative (common) language, tends to have a development of its own.

Language contacts have taken place in the past, are taking place today and will be taking place in the future. They form an integral part of linguistic evolution; they are that segment of linguistics that makes them interesting for studying and a challenge for linguistic research. In Macedonian onomastics they are typical phenomenon for border areas (Slavic-Slavic and Slavic-non-Slavic areas) and also for the ethnically mixed regions in the interior. In these mixed regions Macedonians live together with Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Gypsies. Out of these situations of language contacts, necessarily for modern-day living is the interference of English (only present in a couple of categories: in personal names, in nicknames and in chrematonyms). Apart from this contacts with above mentioned nationalities and their languages have influence in more onomastics categories: personal names, nicknames, surnames, place names, oronyms, hydronyms, chrematonyms, etc.

The influence shows not only to the lexical level, but also to the morphological level (presented by typical anthropo- and topo-formants). In recent years there is a trend to translate the toponyms from Macedonian into Albanian in the regions inhabited by Macedonians and Albanians, or only by Albanians.

This title is very complex, because it represents Macedonian onomastics by sociolinguistically aspect.

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Paper

The Republic of Macedonia is situated in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula, which has resulted in contacts of the Macedonian with almost all South Slavic and Balkan peoples. This has reflected on all areas of life: social/political, economic, cultural/historical, but, most importantly for linguistics and onomastics, it has left a permanent mark on the linguistic evolution in the region. And it is this, the linguistic revolution, that is typical, interesting and provocative for linguists, particularly those who work in language history, dialectology, comparative and confrontative grammar, Balkan studies, sociolinguistics, and, of course, onomastics.

Macedonian, as you may well know, is an Indo-European language, that is, belongs to the Slavic language family, or, to be even more precise, to the South Slavic language branch, descended from the Old Church Slavonic as the oldest Slavic language with a vast literary tradition. On account of Macedonia's geographical position, Macedonian is in direct and natural contact with Serbian and Bulgarian, whereas the contact with Croatian and Slovene was due to social/political conditions imposed by the system of government in former SFRY. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the contact between these two languages has been minor, which only goes to show that it had been unnatural and imposed.

This was a short genealogical presentation of the Macedonian language among the language families of the world. Moreover, the Balkan typological position of Macedonian makes it typical and unique in the group of Slavic languages, which is also the result of the so-called contact similarity (Škiljan, 1985, 159). In fact, Macedonian is not the only Slavic language that is a member of the Balkan linguistic union — Bulgarian, as well as the Southeast Serbian dialects are also typologically classified in it — but it is the only one

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among the Balkan Slavic languages that, together with Arumanian, is central and the most Balkanized in this heterogeneous language group. That is to say, Macedonian and Arumanian share all Balkan linguistic features and have almost completely replaced the synthetic declination with analytic. Or, according to the world-renowned linguist, a noted Slavist and a leading authority on the Macedonian language, Zbigniew Gołąb: "Macedonian is the laboratory for understanding the mechanism behind the forming of the Balkan linguistic union" (1970, 5-18).

I would now like to proceed to the subject of my presentation, to language contacts and names, with a special emphasis on the current situation in Macedonian onomastics regarding this matter.

The most difficult and most sensitive issue in onomastics is the issue of genealogy or origin of names in the context of language contacts. I would therefore like to indicate two phenomena typical of the onomastic system. 1. Language, the most efficient means of communication, is founded on two basic principles: (*a*) on the *principle of the lexical system* as an open system, and (*b*) on the *principle of the grammatical system* as a closed system. 2. The language of names, as opposed to the appellative (common) language, tends to have a development of its own. In accordance with this tendency, there is a belief in onomastics that appellatives (common words) become proper names (onyms) only after they lose their descriptive meaning. It is thus easier to understand why the Macedonian onomastic system contains unclear (non-transparent) material such as pre-Slavic names and names resulting from the contact of Macedonian with other languages (Mitkov, Stamatoski, 2000, 62). Hence proper names and language contacts in Macedonian onomastics may be chronologically presented on several strata or historical stages:

I. The pre-Slavic stratum is hereditary, diverse and heterogeneous. It is the oldest substratum and its linguistic affiliation is difficult to determine. It consists of genetically related and unrelated language elements, which have remained as proof of the ethnic turmoils in the region. This means that, on the synchronic linguistic level, there is still a presence of diachronic remnants, such as:

I.1. Thracian/Illyrian;
I.2. Dacian/Mysian, and
I.3. The remnants of the so-called Balkan Latinity, that is, Balkan Hellenisms and Latinisms.

In Macedonian anthroponymy, the remains of the pre-Slavic substrate are really uncommon. Apart from several proper names (*Butel*, *Bardo* and *Balan*), which are known for a fact to have a pre-Slavic etymology and which are found in the stems of the oikonyms *Butel* (Skopje), *Bardovci* (Skopje) and *Balanci* (Debar), in most cases there are hardly any anthroponyms of pre-Slavic origin (Korobar-Belcheva, 2002, 178-179). It is most likely due to the fact that people are a mobile social formation, and their nominal categories are changeable and less relevant in linguistic history; landscape formations, on the other hand, are static and show moderate signs of spontaneous flexibility. For this reason we find more examples of this substrate in Macedonian toponymy.

I.1/I.2. Remnants of the ***Thracian/Illyrian and Dacian/Mysian language substrate*** have been noted in a small number of hydronyms, oronyms and oikonyms:

a. Examples from hydronymy: in the stem of the name of the river *Radika* is the Thracian/Illyrian root **ard-* meaning 'a flow' (the root **ard-*, by way of metathesis between the initial and middle phoneme transformed into the stem *rad-*, to which the

proto-Slavic suffix -*ika* was added, whereby a direct toponymization of the appellative stem with a feminine ending was carried out), and the name of the river *Drim* contains the Indo-European stem **der-*, **dri-* with a similar meaning (Korobar-Belcheva, 2002, 177).

b. Examples from oronymy: the name of the mountain *Osogovo* contains an Indo-European protoform that in the Thracian language has transformed into **Asagav-*, meaning 'a rocky area, a rocky mountain' (Ivanova, 1996, 462).

c. Examples from oikonymy: the names of the villages *Openica* (Ohrid), *Opae* (Kumanovo), *Opila* (Kriva Palanka) and *Opaja* (Lerin, Aegean Macedonia, nowadays in the Republic of Greece) hide the Indo-European stem **ap-*, which is a dialectal form of **aqu-* and means 'water' (Ilievski, 1988, 498); this stem may also appear in the variants **ab-* and **ub-* and is found as such across the whole Indo-European linguistic territory; the four oikonyms formed from this stem exemplify the typical Slavic transformation of the Indo-European initial **a-* into a Slavic initial **o-*.

I.3. The remains of the so-called **Balkan Latinity**, that is, Balkan Hellenisms and Latinisms (that are also part of the pre-Slavic language substrate), appear in Macedonian toponymy and what is typical of that is that they have adapted really well to the Macedonian language and do not feel foreign at all.

a. Balkan Hellenisms are the toponyms: *Monospitovo*, a village in the Strumica region (from the Greek *μονος σπιτι* meaning 'a single, lonely house,' the naming of which has later been followed by a semantically analogous Slavic material as found in the oikonym *Ednokuḱevo*, still in the Strumica region), (Miteva, 1989, 40); *Trpejca*, a village near Ohrid (derived from the Greek *τραπέζι,* meaning 'a dinner table' + suffix -*ica*) (Pjanka, 1970, 108), and others.

b. Balkan Latinisms are the following toponyms: *Bigla*, a village near Delčevo (stemming from the Latin *vigilia* meaning 'a vigil; a sentry,' which has its Slavic parallel in the name of the mountain *Straža* in Western Macedonia); *Kaštelica*, a microtoponym in the Debar region (derived from the Latin *castellum* meaning 'a castle, a fort,' which has several Slavic parallels).

II. The more recent stratum of external linguistic influences is typical of the more recent history of the Macedonian people and the Macedonian language as compared to the previous oldest stratum. It has resulted from the interference of languages that came about with the arrival of the Slavs on the Balkan Peninsula and interaction and mutual influence on cultural, religious, administrative and traditional level took place. The more recent external stratum in Macedonian onomastics is represented by substrate, adstrate and superstrate elements in the onomastic lexicon, on all planes.

II.1. Substrate elements: Previously in the text there was a mention of the oldest substrate in Macedonian onomastics, concerning toponymy in particular. At this point there will be mention of more recent substrate elements found in anthroponymy. The old Macedonian repertory of names was in fact disrupted with the conversion to Christianity, that is, with the entrance of Greco-Byzantine, Semitic and Latin names forcibly imposed by the Church, such as: *Georgi*, *Dimitar*, *Evgenija*, *Kuzman*, or *Metodij*.

II.2. Adstrate elements in Macedonian onomastics are few. They are influences of Balkan languages (Albanian, Greek, Arumanian) on Macedonian occurring in the period following the arrival of the Slavic tribes on the Balkan Peninsula. They were dominant tribes, pushing

out the indigenous population, hence the fact that their influence on Macedonian is very small. I shall list a couple of examples from toponymy: *Ḱafasan* (from Albanian), *Mavrovo* (from Greek) and *Kodra Fura* (from Arumanian).

II.3. Superstrate elements in Macedonian onomastics appear in the influence of the Ottoman noun repertory on the Macedonian, but this influence is not great on account of the differing religions and spiritual lives. Turkish appellatives are found operating as proper names. Proper names deriving from such appellatives are not present in the Turkish language. For instance: *Sevda* (< Turkish *sevda* 'love'), *Sultana* (< Turkish *sultan* 'monarch, master'), *Fidan* (< Turkish *fidan* 'sapling, plant'). Muslim names are most commonly found in the stem of Macedonian surnames, resulting from the conversion into Islam by some Macedonians: *Demiroski*, *Ramčevski*, *Bajramovski*, *Kadrioski* or *Selimovski*.

III.   The most recent stratum of external linguistic influences in Macedonian onomastics concerns the current situation in it, that is, the contemporary conditions of the Macedonian language. This is the most complex stratum of language interference representing the complex processes of ethnic and linguistic symbiosis in the region. On account of the geographical position of the Republic of Macedonia in the centre of the Balkans, Macedonian has had contacts with Slavic, as well as non-Slavic, or Balkan languages. These language contacts are typical for the border areas of our country and are of two kinds: border contacts between Slavic languages or border contact between a Slavic and a non-Slavic language.

III.1. Border contacts between Slavic language

In the north, Macedonian is in contact with Serbian, or, to be more precise, with Southeast Serbian dialects. This contact is most obvious in the Kumanovo dialect, in which the Serbian influence has reflected in onomastics as well. It has reflected in anthroponymy in choosing typically Serbian names (*Miloje*, *Sredoje*, *Uroš*), and in toponymy in the use of typical Serbian topoformants (such as the formant *-ac* instead of the Macedonian *-ec* in Kumanovo oikonyms: *Rakovac*, *Orašac*, *Strnovac*, *Kosmatac*)

In the east Macedonia borders Bulgaria, but since the dialects along the Struma river (in the region called Pirin Macedonia) are Macedonian, the influence of Bulgarian is minimal (Korobar-Belcheva, 2002, 244-245).

III.2. Border contacts between a Slavic and a non-Slavic language

In the border areas between Slavic and non-Slavic populations the situation is completely different from the previously mentioned Slavic-to-Slavic contact, most likely since it is a matter of a contact between genetically unrelated languages. In fact, in the west, through its western dialects along the geographical area stretching from Tetovo, through Gostivar, Debar, to Struga, Macedonian is in contact with the Albanian language. In these western Macedonian dialects, however, there is no interference from Albanian and there is, hence, no influence in the original onomastic material in the region, which is of Slavic and Macedonian linguistic origin. Unfortunately, there has been a great influx of Albanian population in the region, which has insisted to rename autochtonous Macedonian toponyms into Albanian, in all, not just border areas in which Albanian population lives. This pressure received a legal framework in 2004 with the passing of the Law on Territorial Organization of the Local Self-Government in the Republic of Macedonia. The law provided for a certainly unjustifiable translation instigated by social/political reasons that in the future is to create an artificial and forced idea of the Macedonian toponomastic system and Macedonian onomastics in general. I shall list only several instances of such translations, although there

are numerous examples: *Nagoriçan i Vjetër* for the Macedonian *Staro Nagoričane*, *Dojran i Ri* for *Nov Dojran*, *Qendër* for *Centar*, *Jellofcë e Epërme* for *Gorno Jelovce*.

In the south the Republic of Macedonia borders the Republic of Greece, but the contact area between Macedonian and Greek is on Greek territory, that is, the territory of Aegean Macedonia. Here we have another case of desecration of the Macedonian identity, with the sole difference that the former was within our country, whereas this one is beyond the current state borders, but within the ethnic reach of the Macedonian people. Following the Balkan Wars, in 1913 the Treaty of Bucharest was reached, with which the territory of Macedonia was divided among three Balkan countries: Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. For this reason the Macedonian language territory does not coincide with the territory of the contemporary state. In Aegean Macedonia, nowadays in Greece, the fiercest and most inhumane kind of assimilation has been carried out to this day. The population was mercilessly banished from their homes and Greek population exiled from Turkey was purposefully moved in their place. Most of the exiled so-called Aegeans (Aegean Macedonians) found shelter in the countries of Eastern Europe such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the former USSR. A number of them later returned to their homeland, to a far smaller territory that nevertheless contained the component of Macedonia. Those who stayed were forced to change their Macedonian personal names and surnames into Greek forms, foreign to them, and to make matters worse, they were prohibited from using their mother tongue even in informal, domestic environments. As regards place names in Aegean Macedonia, they were by law renamed into Greek as early as 1926: *Lerin* into *Florina*, *Voden* into *Edessa*, *Neguš* into *Nausa*, *Postol* into *Pella*, *Plasničevo* into *Kria Vrisi*, *Kajlari* into *Ptolemais*, and so forth. Unfortunately, the current state with microtoponymy in Aegean Macedonia cannot be verified. The information the Institute of Macedonian Language has long ago gathered from the Aegean exiles is a well cartographed and digitalized material, but it is far from complete. There is little chance for this material to be expanded, not because of our academic/research qualifications, but on account of current Greco-Macedonian, as well as European politics. It is microtoponymic material, scarce, but precious. It is the truth we have in hand, the proof that Aegean Macedonia is not Greece, even forcibly so.

III.3. The third variety in the group of the most recent stratum of external linguistic influences I would like to point to the interference created in the *ethnically mixed provincial regions*. These are most often towns and villages in which Macedonians live together with Albanian, Turkish, Vlach and other populations. As an illustration, I would like to state that in Skopje, the capital of the Republic of Macedonia, apart from Macedonians, there are Albanians, Turks and Romani; in the cities of Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar and Struga, there are just as many, or sometimes even more, Albanians as Macedonians; in the cities of Bitola, Kruševo and Ohrid there are Macedonians and Vlachs; whereas the cities of Ohrid and Resen, alongside the Macedonian, there is also a Turkish population. What is interesting for these ethnically mixed regions is that the oikonyms are Macedonian, while the microtoponyms have obviously been changed and translated *en masse.* This phenomenon is not typical for all ethnically mixed regions in provincial Macedonia, but only for those in which Albanian and Vlach population lives. Instances of Albanian translations of Macedonian microtoponyms are numerous: *Guri Gjaat* for *Dolgi Kamen*, *Zali Selces* for *Selečka Reka*, *Shulani Maath* for *Golem Rid*, *Mala e Baczovce* for *Bačosko Maalo*. Examples of Vlach translations of Macedonian microtoponyms are far fewer since Vlachs are a considerably smaller ethnic group than Albanians in Macedonia. Their concentration is the greatest in the town of Kruševo, in which they outnumber Macedonians and which is considered the largest Vlach-inhabited area in the country. In fact, the town of Kruševo is the most vivid example of these ethnically mixed regions, offering a beautiful illustration of cohabitation and

togetherness in every aspect between two genetically different peoples, such as Macedonians and Vlachs. Kruševo represents a symbiosis of linguistic, cultural and traditional processes. The Vlachs translated certain Macedonian microtoponyms in the town, but they are so few that they are hardly even noticeable: *Šopotlu a Domnuluj* for *Gospodinova Češma*, *Paplu dila Paris* for *Nivata od Parizovci*, *Ḱošku* for *Vidiko*, *Ohtu* for *Rido*, and others. The interference of Vlach in the mixed regions is more evident on an anthroponymic level, particularly in the hypocoristic forms of personal names. The linguistic symbiosis is so strong on this onomastic level that is difficult to determine the ethnicity of the people from the information their personal names are supposed to give. The interference here is in favour of the Vlach language since its system of personal names with its derivational rules predominates even among the Macedonian population. For instance: for the personal name *Naum*, the forms *Una*, *Unča*, *Unču* are used; for *Georgi* - *Jorgo*, *Jorgu*, *Džodža*, *Džodžu*; for *Atanas* - *Taško*, *Tašku*; for *Dimitar* - *Mitu*, *Maḱa*, *Taḱa*, *Taki*, *Takuli*; for *Sotir* - *Sotiraki*, *Aḱa*, *Aki*, and numerous others.

III.4. The fourth variety of the most recent external linguistic influences is represented by *influences that are the inevitable consequence of modern-day living*. In the current modern world, tending toward overall globalization, the interference of English as the most widely spoken, prestigious and used language in the world predominate. The penetration of English into Macedonia is a process that has begun long ago and will continue into the future, but it is currently at its peak on account of the transition taking place in the Republic of Macedonia. Its influence is most common in the general lexicon of the Macedonian language, most often in domains that are new and trendy, whereas in onomastics the interference of English is only present in a couple of categories: in personal names (*Mary*, *Jessica*, *Jane*, *Bobby*, *George*, *Joe*, most often the personal names of Macedonian children born abroad), in nicknames (*Black*, *Bloody*, *Crazy*, *Stupid*, *Pretty*) and in chrematonyms (*Ray-Ban*, the name of an object in Bitola; *Beverly Hills*, the name of a shopping mall in Skopje; *Hard Rock*, a disco in Skopje; *Saloon* and *Jet Set*, nightclubs in Skopje).

On this note, I had finished my short presentation of Macedonian onomastics when language contacts are concerned. At the end I will deliver some of my views, which would at the same time represent the conclusion of my presentation:

1. Language contacts have taken place in the past, are taking place today and will be taking place in the future. They form an integral part of linguistic evolution; they are that segment of linguistics that makes them interesting for studying and a challenge for linguistic research.

2. Language as the fundamental and crucial means of communication among men is an open system, susceptible to influence and change. Onomastics as part of that system, on the other hand, has demonstrated the greatest reluctance to elemental linguistic occurrences. Metaphorically speaking, onomastics is an oasis in the desert called language. It is the most stable linguistic segment and the only tool in proving the identity of a people.

3. In the Republic of Macedonia there are no purist tendencies in the use of personal names. Macedonian onomastics is characterized by unrestrained freedom in this aspect. But, juxtaposed to this liberalism is also the awareness of nurturing the tradition in naming and that is what makes us unique and special as Macedonians.

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