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**Deconstructing “Balkan Latin”***Dragana Kunčer*

In the following chapter, the issues of typological, logical, and even ontological nature in the scholarship when using the term “Balkan Latin” will be listed. It will be pointed out that the possible solution to the confusing situation should rather be sought in artificiality of the term itself, than in the complexity of the real linguistic problem. Namely, it will be demonstrated that in the case of “Balkan Latin”, and contrary to the sequence of scientific categorization, first the category or linguistic type was created, and afterwards it was “filled up” with the evidence. It will be shown that the motivation for this reverse order is in the political and ideological profile of its creator, a linguist Petar Skok (1881–1856), who along with other intellectuals of the time, believed that the Balkan commonalities exist, and that they derive from the ancient past.

Over the past century, there have been attempts to make a description of the dialects or regional varieties of the Latin language. As is the case with any other natural language, the dialects of Latin have been supposed to have existed all the way through its history.<sup>1</sup> The sources used in these researches are mainly the inscriptions, the material which can be undeniably linked to a specific region, since the place of their findings is usually known.<sup>2</sup> The methods applied are either qualitative, consisting of enumeration of non-classical spellings, or quantitative, consisting of calculation of the percentage of non-classical spellings of some type in the large sets of data and its comparison with different parameters (right spellings, other types of misspellings).<sup>3</sup> The studies, in which the qualitative method was applied, did not prove the hypothesis of regional diversification and only added evidence to the unitarian theory, to which the Latin language was homogenous and had the same features in all the regions of the Roman world.<sup>4</sup> The studies where the quantitative method – which is the more recent one – was applied showed that some differences of the Latin language, mostly of a phonological nature, can indeed be traced, but that they are not complete and distinctive enough to allow the construction of the dialectological profile of a region.<sup>5</sup>

In opposition to the abovementioned qualitative studies from the beginning of the last century, in which it was expected to find the dialectological features in provinces such as Gaul, Spain or Dalmatia, in recent years, the idea that the distinct dialectological profile should be looked for in the territory of smaller communities has developed.

It is as well to get away from the idea that regional features necessarily show up over extensive areas, whether cities, ‘provinces’ or ‘countries’. Small isolated communities, which exist in abundance in societies in which communications are poor, may innovate linguistically under a variety of influences.<sup>6</sup>

It is also shown that Latin in Africa, or African Latin as it is often named, which was considered to be a unique and clearly recognizable regional variety of Latin, was not monolithic at all, and that there was a dialectological distinction between the eastern and western African provinces.<sup>7</sup> Having this in mind, the term “Balkan Latin”, which has a geographic qualifier of a huge area and which is without any restrictions and definition used in the most recent studies, can be questioned as appropriate.

Apart from this problem, that “Balkan Latin” should represent a variety of Latin on a huge area in time when dialects should probably be looked for in smaller territories, there is also a question as to what that area would represent exactly. Namely, this term, as any other composite name of a language with a geographical qualifier, is to be understood as a term which describes a variety of the specific language (Latin) spoken in the specific region (the Balkans), in the same way this is understood for American, British or Australian English in the case of English: these are varieties of English characteristic for America, Britain or Australia. However, in opposition to the notions “American”, “British” or “Australian” which can be identified with an exactly circumscribed area, the same analogy cannot be applied to the term “Balkan”. The simple reason is that there is no consensus about the exact boundaries of the Balkans and whether they should be looked for strictly in geographical or rather in geopolitical sense.<sup>8</sup>

Namely, while in the geographical sense the eastern, southern and the western borders are undisputable – represented by the Black Sea, the Sea of Marmara, the Aegean, Mediterranean, Ionian, and Adriatic Seas – the northern border is viewed differently by different scholars.<sup>9</sup> The issue in the modern historical studies is usually resolved by enumeration of the present-day countries situated in the region named the Balkans, or by the enumeration of the present-day peoples living in the region named the Balkans.<sup>10</sup> But, unsurprisingly, in the same way that there is a disagreement on the geographical area of the Balkans, there is a disagreement on the geopolitical level. Even one and the same author, specialized in the field, can change his or her view on what countries or peoples should be covered by this term, for example, Todorova, in respect to Slovenia which she firstly excluded from the Balkans, and afterwards included in them.<sup>11</sup> When this term is used in the studies concerning ancient languages as a denomination of a dialectological area, the same imprecision can be observed. In the first synthetic work dealing with the Latinity of the Balkan region, Mihaescu’s *Limba latină în provinciile dunărene ale imperiului roman* and its second version published in French, the different Roman provinces were elaborated. The inscriptional material from the province of Noricum was included in the first, but left out of the second version.

## The synonymic terms of Balkan Latin

It must be said, however, that Mihaescu has not used the denomination “Balkan” in the title of either of his works, but in the first one he has spoken of “Danubian” provinces, and in the second, he has named the scope of his research as “Southeastern Europe”. As to the latter term, it was promoted at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a purely geographical term in order to give an alternative to a term “Balkan”, which was thought to have political and ideological connotations. These efforts were only partially successful, and it remains controversial among scholars as to the degree to which the two terms are alike.<sup>12</sup> But, nevertheless, the term “Southeastern Europe” used by Mihaescu, as well as the term “Danubian provinces” used by Mihaescu, and after him by Herman, have been received and interpreted in scholarly literature simply as “Balkan”. Hence, “Latin of the Balkan provinces” as the title of the review of Mihaescu’s book or the term “Balkan Latin” applied when either Mihaescu’s or Herman’s works have been discussed.<sup>13</sup> The beginnings of

this synonymic use may be traced back to the study of Skok (1937) where the terms “Balkan Latin” and “Danubian Latin” are fully interchangeable.<sup>14</sup>

## The perception of the Balkans in antiquity

When it comes to the notion of “Balkan Latin”, apart from the problems already highlighted, there are further methodological issues that make the scrutinization of this term justified. Namely, if the Balkans form a unity in the modern times – at least in a geographical sense since this term was firstly used in a geographical work at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – the question can be posed whether this (geographical or any other) unity also existed in the Roman times. If geographical, what was the name of this unity in the Roman times, since the term “Balkan” belongs to the modern era? If this unity was a cultural or political one, when exactly in antiquity was this unity formed, and how long did it exist as such? Namely, if a dialectological area is to be presumed in the Roman times in the area of the Balkans and within its borders, a certain level of unity in the territory must be shown to have existed as well.

There are many views on the Balkans in recent history books, according to which a negative answer would be given to all these questions. “At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people spoke as if the Balkans had existed forever. However, 200 years earlier, they had not yet come into being.”<sup>15</sup> This is perhaps the most blatantly formulated, but the same attitude is shared by many other scholars: the singular unity of the peninsula was born when the name was given, and that was done only two centuries ago, in the work of a German geographer Zeune in 1808.<sup>16</sup>

However, Zeune’s idea to give a name to the peninsula – and thus outline its singularity – reflected the beliefs of the ancient historians and geographers that the region is separated from the rest of the land by the Balkan mountain range, the *Haemus Mons*. This perception was first to be found in the work of a Greek historian Theopomp in the fourth century <sup>BCE</sup>.<sup>17</sup> Theopomp expressed the opinion that from the highest peak of Haemus range, the Adriatic and Black Seas could be seen at the same time. This view implied that the whole region was in the shape of a narrow peninsula, connected to the rest of the land by an isthmus.<sup>18</sup> The image of the proximity of two seas, and of the Mount Haemus which connected them, was transmitted through the report (now lost) of Polybius in the historiography of Roman period.<sup>19</sup> In the work of Livy, it was presented in a vivid account of the Macedonian king Phillip V climbing the mountain during the military expedition in the year 181 BCE in order to prepare his war strategy:

Philippus... Stobos Paeoniae exercitu indicto in Maedicam ducere pergit. cupido eum cep-  
erat in verticem Haemi montis ascendendi, quia vulgatae opinioni crediderat Ponticum  
simul et Hadriaticum mare et Histrum amnem et Alpes conspici posse: subiecta oculis ea  
haud parvi sibi momenti futura ad cogitationem Romani belli.<sup>20</sup>

Or, in the treatise of Pomponius Mela, a geographer writing in the first century CE, it is the basic narrative that is told: *Ex quibus Haemus in tantum altitudinis abit, ut Euxinum et Adriam ex summo vertice ostendat.*<sup>21</sup>

As to the origins of this story, it is probably Bunbury who gives the most plausible explanation: this idea derives from the confusion of the names Ister (that is, the Danube) and the Istrians, a people at the head of Adriatic.<sup>22</sup> This was a popular belief, he suggests, that existed among Greeks in the fourth century BCE and got its written form in the work of Theopomp who referred that Danube, by one of its mouths, is discharging its waters into Adriatic “καὶ τὸ τὸν Ἰστρον ἐνὶ τῶν στομάτων εἰς τὸν Ἀδρίαν ἐμβάλλειν”.<sup>23</sup>

The image of the separateness of the region is also expressed in the work of Strabo, who was critical of the belief of the visibility of the two seas from the top of the mountain, and deemed such an account as “untrue”, but maintained the idea that the area is physically separated enough from the rest of the land to address it, at the beginning of the chapter, as “the remainder of Europe”.<sup>24</sup> As to its position, he cites it to be “between the Ister and the encircling sea”. Thus, the River Ister represents the only northern boundary of the region mentioned in Strabo’s work. The unnamed Illyrian, Paeonian and Thracian mountains are positioned in-between “the parts that border on Italy, on the Alps, and on the counties of the Germans, Dacians, and Gets”. However, Strabo’s remark that these mountains are forming “almost a line” “μίας πως γραμμῆν” stretching from Adriatic to the Pontus, which was repeated in the writings of the Greek and Byzantine historians, has influenced the perception – which lasted until the 19<sup>th</sup> century – that it was these which form the northern border of the peninsula.<sup>25</sup> It obviously merged with the traditional view of Mount Haemus as a majestic and dominant mountain in the region, triggering the spread of its name to the otherwise anonymous mountains “τά τε Ἰλλυρικὰ καὶ τὰ Παιονικὰ καὶ τὰ Θράκια ὄρη”. Hence, in the formulation of the German geographer Zeune, it is Mount Haemus that stretches from one sea to the another: “In the North, this peninsula is separated from the rest of the land by the long mountain range of the Balkan, or as it is called before the Mount Albanus, Scardus, Haemus, which is in the North-West, near the little peninsula Istria, connected to the Alps, and which in the East, by two branches, disappears in the Black Sea”.<sup>26</sup>

If these views of the abovementioned ancient geographers and historians on the region which is today called the Balkans are to be summarized, it can be said that at the beginning of the Common Era, there was a perception that the region was geographically separated from the rest of the continent, that there was a perception of its borders involved “the river Danube and the encircling sea”, that a mountain range was somehow involved in its boundaries, but that there was no name which would encompass the entirety of it.

The beginning of the Common Era also meant the Romanization and Latinization of the region as a part of the process of formation of the new provinces. The predominantly Latin-speaking provinces – those which are north of the so-called “Jireček line” – received their provincial status in the near the beginning of the Common Era: Noricum in 16 BCE, Moesia in 6 CE, Dalmatia and Pannonia after the dissolution of the province of Illyricum in the first half of the first century CE, and Dacia in 106 CE (see Figure 13.1). Under the administrative reform of Diocletian at the beginning of the fourth century CE, and after the loss of Dacia under Aurelian in 271 CE, these five Balkan provinces were divided into fourteen different provinces: Noricum Ripense, Noricum Mediterraneum, Pannonia Superior, Pannonia Inferior, Savia, Valeria, Dalmatia, Praevalitana, Moesia Superior, Dardania, Dacia Ripensis, Dacia Mediterranea, Moesia Inferior, and Scythia. These provinces belonged to three different dioceses: dioceses of Pannonia, Moesia, and Thracia (see Figure 13.2).<sup>27</sup> At the beginning of the fifth century CE, they were encompassed by three different praetorian prefectures: prefectures of Italy, of Illyricum, and of the East.<sup>28</sup>

If this short account on the territorial organization of the Latin-speaking part of the Balkans is to be summarized, it can be concluded that this region consisted in the Early Empire of several administrative units which were not gathered together even when the larger territories (dioceses, praetorian prefectures) were created in the Late Empire.

Apart from the administrative fragmentation, there was also a fragmentation from the cultural and ethnical aspect. The provinces, but also the smaller regions in the same province, differed between each other as to the level of urbanization, economy, and Romanization. For example, in Dalmatia the coastal parts were urbanized and Romanized very soon upon the Roman conquest, but its hinterland was never completely culturally assimilated. As to the ethnic plurality, there



**Figure 13.1** The Latin-speaking Provinces of the Balkans at Death of Traian (117 CE).

were “uncountable tribes” of the so-called Illyrians (which is rather a conventional geographical term than an ethnic term) who lived in the region from the pre-Roman times, then Celts, Pannonians, Dacians, Gets, and Thracians, to name only the largest groups.<sup>29</sup>

If the above-mentioned is taken into consideration, Herman’s opinion that the “South-Eastern European provinces do not form a unity which can serve as a base or stimulus for the analogical linguistic evolution” seems plausible and valid.<sup>30</sup> Except from the rather vague geographical perception of individuality of the region, which encompasses both the Latin-speaking parts and the Greek-speaking parts of the Balkans, from the administrative, ethnical and cultural point of view, the Latin-speaking provinces of the Balkans did not represent a whole in the Roman times. All the more, in other place of the same study, Herman states that “there are small chances” that these provinces had ever represented a unity, even relative, which would make them distinctive linguistically in regard to the other (Latin-speaking) regions of the Empire. Similarly, Nedeljkovic, at the beginning of his study devoted to the Latin in the Balkans (“Balkan Latin”, as he calls it) questions the idea whether this territory constitutes an “organic or otherwise sensible whole in



**Figure 13.2** The Latin-speaking Provinces of the Balkans according to the Verona List (c. 303–324 CE).

terms of Latin linguistic geography”.<sup>31</sup> Without directly answering the question, in the same study, the following comment is to be found: “Balkan Latin is special in there being nothing special about it”.<sup>32</sup>

### The beginning of the use of the term ‘Balkan Latin’

Nedeljkovic perhaps best sums up the difficulties facing even an attempt to study “Balkan Latin” noting that “in terms of regional diversification Balkan Latin may well be an invalid concept, in the sense that the name does not apply to any distinguishable reality.”<sup>33</sup> Consequently, any discussion on the sources of “Balkan Latin”, on the linguistic area of “Balkan Latin”, on the lexical and syntactic features of “Balkan Latin”, on the speakers of “Balkan Latin” becomes void of a scientific purpose. But, in a paradoxical way, not only in the study of Nedeljkovic, but also in the study of Herman, which are among most recent studies on the topic, this discussion is still present; the title of a subchapter of Herman’s study is “The features of Latin in Danubian provinces”.<sup>34</sup> So, despite arguing for the non-existence of *differentia specifica* of the subject, in the case of “Balkan Latin”, it is taken, in the same scholarly works, as a subject of the research.

The term "Balkan Latin" was first widely used in the series of articles by Petar Skok, titled "Zum Balkanlatein", published from 1926–1934 in the *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*.<sup>35</sup> While modern researchers of Skok's work deem these articles to be "crucial studies" in his career, it should be noted that they are lacking clear definition of their central term of "Balkan Latin".<sup>36</sup>

While Skok does not himself explicitly define the term, a working definition might be gleaned from particular sections of his studies. The initial paragraph of a subchapter of the last article of the series represents an explanation of its title, and where the term "Balkan Latin" might be defined. In the particular subchapter, the title "The lexical elements common to Balkan Latin and to South Italy", Skok clarifies with the following introductory note: "Here will be brought together the lexical concordances of Latin and Greek origin which exist, on the one hand, between Old Dalmatian, Serbo-Croatian, Albanian, Rumanian, and Romance and Greek of South Italy, on the other hand".<sup>37</sup> Hence, it can be understood that by "Balkan Latin" Skok meant a bulk of words of Latin and Greek (sic!) origin present in the languages spoken in the Balkans in the Middle Ages and in the modern times: (Old) Dalmatian, Serbian and Croatian, Albanian and Rumanian. But, if the complete study of Skok is taken into account, it can be seen that "Balkan Latin" is mostly regarded in a quite different sense: as a coherent and independent linguistic system, or as a "language" in its own right, with all levels of structure. According to Skok, "Balkan Latin" has its own lexicon with its own loanwords and, has its own phonetic, morphological and syntactic rules. This second meaning for "Balkan Latin" is clearly expressed in Skok's later work when discussing the importance of Romance studies for the study of South-Slavic languages: "South Slavs came in the Balkans in a time when Balkan Vulgar Latinity has been still spoken there."<sup>38</sup> That this is a principle meaning which Skok's studies convey can be seen from the criticism of Muljadic, who states that the expression "Balkan Latinity" should not be understood "as one singular language" (but as a denomination of a group of different varieties).<sup>39</sup> If then, the primary meaning of Skok's "Balkan Latin", and the primary way in which the term is used in his and subsequent studies, is that it is *a language* (or a dialect of *a language*), the issue of the identification of this language remains to be addressed.

### "Balkan Latin/Romance"

According to the studies that equate the terms "Balkan Latin" and "Balkan Romance", it can be concluded that the language in question is a Romance language, but not in itself Latin. For instance, Friedman identifies "Balkan Latin" as a Romance language, and calls it, along with Venetian Italian, Greek and Slavic, "the language of power in the Balkans in the Middle Ages".<sup>40</sup> In the same line of thought are Ligorio and Lindstedt. They equate "Balkan Latin" and "Balkan Romance" when discussing the linguistic situation in the Balkans in the Early Middle Ages. Ligorio, in his study devoted to the lexical stratification of Romance in the Adriatic region, states that for the period from seventh to tenth centuries, the term "Balkan Latin" or "Balkan Romance" could be used.<sup>41</sup> Lindstedt argues that it was "Balkan Latin/Romance which came into contact with Proto-Slavic in the Balkans from the sixth century onwards, after the Slavs spread to the peninsula."<sup>42</sup> If "Balkan Latin" then is to be understood as a Romance language, which was spoken from the sixth century onward in the Balkans, then the same term – according to some of most recent theories – cannot be used in relation to the Antiquity, in the same way, it cannot be said that listeners of Cicero or Augustine spoke *Romance*.<sup>43</sup> Latin and Romance, though genealogically related languages, designate two different linguistic systems between which "exists a frontier".<sup>44</sup>

However, it is precisely in relation to the Roman period that this term is used by Adams, whose study on regional diversification of Latin covers period spanning from second century BCE to the

end of sixth century CE. Adams mentions “Balkan Latin” twice: Once discussing the importance of inscriptions in the studies of Latin dialectology, and in second place, in the title of a small subchapter on “dative of possession”, a special function of dative which was frequent in the funerary inscriptions of Dalmatia and, to a lesser extent, in the inscriptions of other Balkan provinces.<sup>45</sup> These two mentions of “Balkan Latin” by Adams are quite contradictory in an ontological sense. While the second mention implies the existence of “Balkan Latin” as a variety of the Latin language, the first one denies it. In Adams’ words:

In some eastern areas there were probably no established local Latin-speaking populations, but only traders or soldiers passing through; it is pointless, for example, to examine Balkan inscriptions as if they might show up features of ‘Balkan Latin’.<sup>46</sup>

If there is no local population in the Balkans who speaks Latin, there is also no variety or dialect of Latin which is spoken there, it can be concluded. Yet, upon analysis, there are two different arguments in this passage which are regarded as one and the same: that it is simultaneously possible to extract from the inscriptions the regional features of Latin in the Balkans, and that there were no inhabitants of the Balkans who spoke Latin as their first language. If the first could be discussed, taking into account the formal style of the inscriptions and the rather complicated process of epigraphic writing, the second one perhaps should be rejected in the way Nedeljkovic did:

Still, one should not dismiss the whole question by assuming that Latin in the continental Balkans had no native speakers of local origin at all. If nothing else, it is certain that Latin was the first language of Constantine and Jerome, who came from the Balkans, as much as of the Spaniard Theodosius or the African Augustine.<sup>47</sup>

## Two approaches to ‘Balkan Latin’

In close connection to the abovementioned views, which respectively identify “Balkan Latin” as a Romance language, or with Latin itself, there are two different methodologies of approaching it as a subject of research. The first one is the approach of comparative reconstruction. That is, the lexical and phonetic isoglosses of Latin origin between the modern languages of the Balkans are sought and used for the reconstruction of the phenomenon. In these studies, a clear categorization of the notion (whether it’s a language, dialect of a language, or a bulk of etyma spread on the specific geographic area), chronological designation of the notion (when exactly this language/dialect of a language has been spoken, or when these words have spread in the specific area), as well as the sociolinguistic specification of the notion (by whom has it been spoken, in what kind of communication has been used, was it used as a “living” language, was it used as a “first” language, etc.) are usually absent. For instance, Tagliavini introduces this term and his methodology in the following manner:

“But before we start discussing the phenomena which are related to Proto-Rumanian, we need to examine some features which can be related to an earlier period and which can be attributed to ‘Balkan Latin’. In order to reconstruct these features more than scarce epigraphic material will be compared with Dalmatian and Latin elements of Albanian”.<sup>48</sup>

In Rosetti’s work, the description of the term is rather circular: “‘Balkan Latin’ is represented by Rumanian (with its dialects south of Danube), by Vegliot (now disappeared) and by the elements



of the vocabularies of Albanian, Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian".<sup>49</sup> In Windisch's study, which Steinke designates a "very profound description of 'Balkan Latin'", the term "Balkan Latin" is used interchangeably with "Balkan Romance".<sup>50</sup> There is no clear definition. Windisch does mention that there are issues regarding the term but decides to keep it "despite of all imprecisions of linguistic geography and the problems of classification which are connected with them" following the examples of Gallo-Romance and Ibero-Romance.<sup>51</sup> As to the period then which the term "Balkan Latin" in Windisch's study encompasses, it is also unclear. Because of the mention of Gallo-Romance and Ibero-Romance, which are taken as the exemplary methodological models, and because of the identification of the (Balkan) Latin with (Balkan) Romance, it may be said that it appears that the study of Windisch "Balkan Latin" should instead be associated with Romance languages and the period when these are spoken, rather than with Antiquity.

In opposition to these works, which are based on Proto-Romance comparative reconstruction, there are studies on "Balkan Latin" based on the Latin material itself. In accordance with the sources which are in most cases dated, and which consist of inscriptions, itineraries, and (few) literary texts, their results are chronologically limited to the period of Antiquity or Late Antiquity. Apart from the chronological precision, there is also a precision of linguistic terms. For instance, the works which take into account the area of Eastern Adriatic coast as one of the Balkan areas where the Romanization and Latinization was firmly rooted and long-lasting can positively apply their conclusions to the Latin language. Sociolinguistic research demonstrates that until the end of the sixth century at least, Latin was spoken in this region, not Romance.<sup>52</sup> The development of Romance idiom(s) was triggered later, as a consequence of disruption caused by migrations.<sup>53</sup> The results of the studies based on Latin material show that there are no special features of Balkan Latin; there is a unity of the Latin language of this region and the Latin language of the other Latin-speaking regions of the Roman world.<sup>54</sup> Herman, however, assumes that this unity is rather fictive and that by using the "microtechnique" the clivages in "Latin of Danubian provinces" should appear. They would, he affirms, incorporate this region in the Latin world "in a more concrete and a more lively way".<sup>55</sup>

## Balkan sprachbund

The term "Balkan Latin" is also used in relation to the concept of sprachbund which is, in turn, a notion coined to outline the common linguistic features shared by the languages which belong to the same geographical area, but are genealogically unrelated or distantly related (for the Balkans: Balkan Slavic languages, Balkan Romance languages, Albanian, Greek, Romani, Turkish).<sup>56</sup> These common features which make of the Balkans a sprachbund, or a convergence area as it is also called, are the shared features detected on morphosyntactic and phonological level, but also on the level of lexicon and phraseology. The term "Balkan Latin" is usually related to the shared lexicon. And, it is the presence of the same words of Latin origin in some of the Balkan languages, that is considered to supply the sufficient evidence for the existence of such a linguistic reality.

However, the evidence provided seems not to be sufficient. Namely, the number of languages which are compared in the search for those shared lexical features of the Balkan convergence area is often minimal. Hence, Solta in his study, which is deemed to be a classic work in the field of Balkan linguistics, establishes most of the common features by comparing Rumanian and Albanian.<sup>57</sup> Apart from the minimal number of Balkan languages, which are compared and whose shared lexical features of Latin origin are considered as a proof for the existence of "Balkan Latin", the number of enlisted common lexemes used as evidence is also small, sometimes minimal.<sup>58</sup>

It can be added that the same “minimalist” argumentation is used in some recent works, for example, two languages compared with twelve shared words of Latin origin enlisted.<sup>59</sup>

At this point, it is however interesting to ask the following questions: why these shared Latin loanwords are, in the abovementioned studies, attributed to “Balkan Latin”, and not just to Latin? Why the introduction of such a debatable concept was preferred to the concepts of Romanization, Latinization, or Latin influence, which are already applied in the case of other parts of the Roman world? Also, one can ask: if the convergences present in the Balkan sprachbund are, according to the recent theories, primarily due to the interaction of bilingual speakers in the contact zones, who were trying to establish efficient communication, and if it is thought that these features only from the bordering territories spread across larger areas, why, as explanation of the common Latin loanwords present in the Balkan languages, it is rather a hypothetical substrate macro dialect that is postulated, than the contact-induced changes developed in the smaller territories?<sup>60</sup> And, even if other ‘Balkanisms’ are triggered by a substrate language, it may not necessarily mean that this specific shared feature – a common lexicon of Latin origin, is triggered in the same way. As Joseph asserts for the Balkan sprachbund: “different features have different histories”.<sup>61</sup> And finally, the contact zones could have been pre-Balkan, because the place of the symbiosis of some Balkan peoples, e.g. of the abovementioned Albanians and Rumanians, still remains largely unknown and could have been out of the Balkan geographical area.<sup>62</sup>

## United Balkans

If those two terms “Balkan sprachbund” and “Balkan Latin” are to be compared, it can be observed that both of them assert that the Balkans form, in a linguistic sense, a kind of unity.<sup>63</sup> However, the concept of unity related to the Balkans represents – in a way – an oxymoron. The Balkans is regarded as an example of fragmentation and discord, as demonstrated by the definitions of the words ‘balkanization’ or ‘balkanize’ featuring in the lexicon of various languages. But, as to the concept of “Balkan sprachbund”, though it is a question *per se*, it can be pointed out that this notion of “relatively united linguistic area” refers rather to the convergences which are present in the Balkan languages, than to existence of one common Balkan language. So – it can be said – the “degree of unification” postulated for these two terms is quite different. The existence of a common dialect of a certain area, as it is the case with “Balkan Latin”, postulates much stronger unity – an intense contact between the speakers, a shared culture, but also a sense of togetherness.

If the non-linguistic opinions expressed by Skok, the propagator of the term “Balkan Latin”, are analyzed, it can be seen that Skok, along with a linguist Budimir and another influential intellectuals from the region, had the belief that this very kind of cultural unity had existed in the Balkans in the past (and still existed in the present). According to this intellectual circle, the peoples who belong to this unity share the particular features of mentality, which last continuously from the prehistoric times. This particular mentality, if compared to the mentality of the peoples in the other parts of Europe and world, can also be regarded as prestigious and “more human”.<sup>64</sup> Along with Budimir, Skok believed that the nations of the Balkans are unaware neither of this unity, nor of this prestige.<sup>65</sup>

The desire to raise the awareness among the Balkan peoples, but also among the Balkan politicians of these shared features and shared mentality – in order that people from the region through the piece and transnational solidarity achieve a better life – was expressed in the writings of Skok and Budimir:

Balkan culture should develop in the unity with variations. The variations are the cultures of single Balkan peoples. New Balkan spirit of integrity and collectivity should in a

harmonic way connect these variations in a synthesis. This spirit should be stopping the conflicts which would occur in the process of development of single national cultures in the Balkans.<sup>66</sup>

Though they affirmed that the science devoted to the Balkan commonalities, or “Balkanology”, is based on the scientific methods and the scientific facts, and thus apolitical, they, at the same time, proclaimed its practical and political aims.<sup>67</sup> It can also be seen that in their thought the Antiquity hold a prominent place, and that the common features which could be established to derive from this specific period were deemed to be of significant evidential power – not only for the theory of the Balkan homogeneity which would then be qualified with a long tradition, but also to the theory of the importance and prestige of the Balkans which this region, in ancient times, as they claimed, possessed.<sup>68</sup>

It appears then that all the conclusions relating to the Antiquity which derive from this programmatic framework need a new evaluation and a new verification. The notion of “Balkan Latin” is certainly one of them.

## Notes

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- 27 Lat. Ver. IV–VI.
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