

OFFPRINT

MEDITERRANEAN LANGUAGE REVIEW

VOLUME THREE

edited by

ALEXANDER BORG, PAUL WEXLER

OTTO HARRASSOWITZ WIESBADEN

A FRESH LOOK AT THE BALKAN *SPRACHBUND*:
SOME OBSERVATIONS ON H. W. SCHALLER'S
DIE BALKANSPRACHEN

BRIAN D. JOSEPH

The Ohio State University

We now stand at a temporal distance of more than a decade from the publication of H.W. Schaller's work, *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie* (Heidelberg 1975) and numerous reviews of this work have already appeared in print. These include Boretzky 1976, Bevington 1977, Gălăbov 1977, Jakoby 1976, Kurzová 1977, Mihăescu 1977, Solta 1977, Trummer 1977, Thomas 1978, Zett 1978, Saramandu 1979, and Smrčková 1980.¹ The rather large number of reviews alone suggests the importance of this book, even if they are not uniformly praising. These reviews fill in some crucial missing details (e.g. Mihăescu on the sporadic occurrence of "Balkanesque" numerals in Post-Classical Greek and of pronoun doubling in Late Latin), provide important corrections (see, in particular, Boretzky, though many of the reviewers pick up some of the same errors), additions (e.g. Gălăbov's discussion of the geopolitical history of the area and its relevance for various common Balkan linguistic features, and his bringing to light once more — see Gălăbov 1966 — the extent of the use of the word-formatic 'nik' in the Balkans), and caveats (e.g. that of Bevington regarding the use of Schaller's Albanian data), and finally point out significant omissions (e.g. Zett on the absence of any references to Judeo-Spanish and Romani as "languages of the Balkans" and/or "Balkan languages", and Solta on the absence of any real discussion of the ancient Balkan languages, especially Thracian and Illyrian).

Given the detail and extensiveness of these critiques (e.g. Gălăbov's is 17 pages long!), one might well ask whether yet another evaluation is needed. I would say yes, for a variety of reasons. First, to a certain extent, a review of the reviews is useful, even on the small scale such as is

1. I must voice my thanks to my research assistant Lisa Nemnich for her help in tracking down these reviews for me. This list does not purport to be exhaustive, only representative.

provided herein (e.g. in the preceding paragraph), since they supplement and complement Schaller's work so much. Second, despite the thoroughness of these reviews, there are still a few additional comments to be made about Schaller's work that the other reviewers have overlooked — these are treated below. The third reason stems from the nature of what Schaller has produced: *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie* is above all else an attempt to provide a "state-of-the-art" (as of circa 1975) handbook for the study of the Balkan languages as a linguistic unit. As such, it has a certain timelessness about it that is often missing from other works in linguistics, for example a textbook in syntactic theory, and thus makes it eminently reviewable at any time. A final reason is that researchers working on questions of "Balkanphilologie" since 1975 have often taken Schaller's necessarily brief but succinct observations and summations as a point of departure for their own analyses and discussions. Such was the case in my own study of the loss of the infinitive in the Balkan languages (Joseph 1983), and I am not alone in this regard; indeed, Schaller's handbook has been cited in the vast majority of articles on Balkan linguistics since its publication.

At the same time, though, it must not be forgotten that a classic handbook on Balkan linguistics was produced some 45 years before Schaller's book, namely the monumental work of Sandfeld 1930². Thus a question that must also be asked regarding Schaller's work is whether the book itself was needed. Here too the answer is clearly yes, for although Schaller covers — necessarily, one might add — some of the same ground that Sandfeld did, he does so with an entirely different organization and moreover has to incorporate into his work 45 years of scholarship in the field which has emerged since Sandfeld. Furthermore, Schaller does add elements to the discussion of the Balkan languages which Sandfeld did not mention, such as an agreement among South Slavic and Greek in the use of accusative enclitic objects with demonstrative particles (e.g. Greek *εἰς τοῦτο* 'here it is!') and the convergent nature of the vowel systems of the Balkan languages (e.g. all having at least the vowels *i - e - a - o - u*).

Schaller's purpose in producing this book is, as he himself states in his *Vorwort*, to provide an introduction to the Balkan languages and to several questions related to their study, i.e. to *Balkanphilologie* in its broadest sense. Many of the sections included in the book are the direct

2. Sandfeld's ideas appeared in print first in 1926 in a Danish version but most researchers refer to the more accessible French edition of 1930.

result of this purpose: the substantial bibliography, covering pages 1-28 (though later superseded by Schaller's own 109-page 1977 effort — see also Zett's review for numerous additional important bibliographic references); a survey of the history of the discipline, with brief comments on important names in Balkanology from the 19th and 20th centuries (Chapter 1, especially pages 37-45); a discussion of the concept of *Sprachbund* (Chapter 2, pages 49-59); and brief historical and structural sketches of the individual languages (scattered throughout Chapter 1, and covering all of Chapter 3, pages 60-95), even where the facts are not necessarily relevant to an understanding of that language in comparison to the others around it (as with some of the details given about the historical phonology of the south Slavic languages or the loss of -μ verbs between Ancient and Modern Greek, etc.). The inclusion of all these sections is justifiable and actually necessary, given that this book is designed to introduce the reader to the study of the Balkan languages, for this study rightly entails not just their collective study, i.e. as a *Sprachbund*, but also their individual study.

Also crucial to Schaller's purpose is the development of classificatory schemata for the languages in question, for classification is often the first step towards understanding a phenomenon. Throughout the course of this book, numerous classifications, none of which are mutually exclusive, are proposed and commented upon. Indeed, Schaller's efforts in this regard are squarely within the spirit and even tradition of general investigations within linguistics, for ours is a discipline which thrives on dichotomies and oppositions (e.g. phonemic versus phonetic, diachronic versus synchronic, phonology versus morphology, etc.). Perhaps the most important such dichotomy that Schaller develops is that of *Balkansprache* versus *Sprache des Balkans* (pp. 29-32).

A *Sprache des Balkans*, i.e. "language of the Balkans", is, for Schaller, a geographically determined characterization, including all the languages which are to be found in the Balkan peninsula. Thus, Turkish, according to this criterion, counts on a par with Greek, Macedonian, etc., and so could Hungarian and Slovenian, if the limits of the Balkan geographical zone are drawn broadly enough. The geographical basis of this classification, by the way, makes it all the more curious that so little attention is given to the ancient Balkan languages (though see now Katičić 1976) and that Romani and Judeo-Spanish are not mentioned at all. A *Balkansprache*, i.e. "Balkan language", on the other hand, is a language of the Balkans which exhibits a number of certain linguistic

characteristics, i.e. those that have traditionally been discussed in connection with the Balkans - the complete or partial absence of a verbal category of infinitive, a future tense formation based on a form of the verb for 'want', a postposed definite article, the falling together of the genitive and dative cases, etc. (see below for more discussion). According to this structurally based typological notion, then, Turkish, Hungarian and Slovenian differ from other languages of the Balkans, for they do not show the appropriate structural features. As Bevington has pointed out, though, this distinction may not be a useful one, since for practical reasons (assuming the conventional narrow definition of "Balkan"), the geographical criterion really only adds Turkish to the list of languages relevant for the Balkans.

To further distinguish among the Balkan languages proper, Schaller later (in Chapter 4, pp. 103-107) divides them into Balkan languages *ersten Grades* and Balkan languages *zweiten Grades*. The first-grade languages — also called *Kernsprachen* of the Balkan *Sprachbund* — are those which display the largest number of Balkan characteristic features, namely, Albanian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, and Romanian, while the second-grade languages are the remaining Balkan languages, Greek and Serbo-Croatian, which show some of the relevant characteristics but not as many as the other languages (e.g. Greek does not postpose its definite article). He utilizes a similar schema when classifying Balkanisms (pp. 192-3, in Chapter 7), dividing the shared characteristics into *primäre* and *sekundäre Balkanismen*. Here the relevant criterion is the number of languages exhibiting a feature, with more than two being the threshold for a given feature to cross over into the realm of the primary Balkanisms. Again as Bevington points out, numbers by themselves can be misleading, for a feature shared by Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, and Macedonian alone could count the same as one shared by Bulgarian, Greek, and Albanian. Schaller does temper this, however, by generally treating South Slavic as a unit for the purposes of counting.

In some cases, though, it seems that Schaller is guilty of overclassifying. For example, he extends his concept of *ersten Grades* and *zweiten Grades* to the various dialects of the Balkan languages, referring (p. 105) to *Balkandialekte "ersten Grades"* and *"zweiten Grades"*; the dialects can of course be classified in this way, but it hardly seems enlightening to separate the "dialects" from the "languages" here. In fact, in his discussion of the Balkan languages in general, Schaller seems constantly to be treating the regional dialects as somehow being beside the point, though his treatment of the southeast Serbian (*Torlak*) dialects

is a noteworthy exception, for he generally refers to the properties of the written standard languages in discussing common Balkan features. As has often been emphasized in discussions of Balkan linguistics, the dialects cannot be ignored, for contact among the various Balkan languages has taken place at the level of individual (groups of) speakers, and these have usually been speakers of regional dialects.

Another instance of overclassifying comes in his discussion of various features of the languages of the Balkans, for he mentions (pp. 34-35) whether a language, within the context of Indo-European, is a *centum* or a *satəm* language. Not only is this of dubious relevance for understanding any Balkan phenomena, but in the case of Albanian, the actual determination of its status is far from clear-cut; that language seems to preserve traces of an original (at least late-) Indo-European three-way place of articulation distinction in the guttural consonants (see now Huld 1983 for a summary of the controversy with references). Finally, in his discussion (in section 4 of Chapter 6, pp. 172-190) of lexical similarities among the languages of the Balkans, Schaller distinguishes among loan words along a number of parameters, including the ultimate origin of the loan word, the extent of assimilation into the borrowing language, and so forth; while certainly valid distinctions, they are not in themselves especially valuable for furthering our understanding of the dynamics of the Balkan *Sprachbund*. Even with these occasional overindulgences in classification, though, Schaller's development of such a variety of classificatory schemata for Balkan phenomena in general can be seen as quite useful, especially for his purpose of informing the reader about *Balkanphilologie* in its broadest sense.

The remaining chapters and sections of Schaller's book constitute the "meat" of his work. Chapter 6 (pp. 123-190) treats, from both a diachronic and a synchronic standpoint, the various agreements among the Balkan languages, in phonology (pp. 124-133), in morphosyntax (pp. 134-160), in (pure) syntax (pp. 161-171), and in the lexicon (pp. 172-190). Here, though, it is perhaps somewhat unfortunate — though entirely understandable, since virtually all research in Balkan linguistics is similarly focussed — that so much of Schaller's attention is directed toward the similarities among the Balkan languages; as Friedman 1981 has perceptively pointed out (and practiced in his own work on Balkan verbal modality), "our goals [i.e. as Balkan linguists] must include the comparison of the divergent as well as the convergent."

Schaller's choice of which Balkan features — those widely represented in the Balkans but not necessarily found in all the languages — to discuss holds no real surprises. It takes in all the expected ones, i.e. mostly those that

Sandfeld noted or that have been brought to light since 1930, though interestingly he does not mention a few of Sandfeld's nonlexical parallels (e.g. the use of 'and' before an affirmative sentence that immediately follows a negative sentence, or the occurrence of double object constructions with 'ask' and 'teach'); even if deemed insignificant, such parallels probably should have been mentioned, and dismissed, somewhere in the book. Those he does include are: the presence of *i-e-a-o-u* in the vowel inventories without phonological contrasts in quantity, openness, or nasalization, the occurrence of a mid-to-high central vowel, a "Bulgarian-type" vowel system with two tongue-height distinctions and three tongue-position distinctions, the falling together of genitive and dative, a maintaining of the vocative case as a separate nominal category, the postposed definite article, analytic means for adjectival comparison, the formation of the numerals 11 through 19 with the "locative" pattern "X (= a digit) - on - ten", the loss of the infinitive with the concomitant increased use of finite subordinate clauses, an analytic future tense formed with a particle related to (or at least historically derived from) the verb 'want', the doubling of object nominals with clitic pronouns, the use of the short (i.e. clitic) pronominal forms in the function of possessive pronouns, the use of the accusative clitic pronouns with demonstrative particles, a preference for definite nouns as the object of the preposition 'with', as well as numerous lexical agreements.

In his discussion of each of these (putative) Balkanisms, Schaller demonstrates a good command of the literature and gives generally sound summaries of the facts. Moreover, he is careful in his presentation of differing opinions and in his rejection of certain of them (e.g. substratum explanation in general). While definitive judgements on the many questions these cross-Balkan agreements raise would certainly be welcome, they are not always ventured by Schaller nor are they indeed always possible; Schaller, however, is not really to be faulted for his silence on any of these matters, for it is entirely in keeping with the nature of the issues themselves and the handbook style of his work.

The handbook approach Schaller takes, though, requires that he be brief in his statements of the facts in the various languages, and this can leave the informed reader unsatisfied, for more often than not, what is really needed is an in-depth look at and assessment of the facts, something simply not possible in a few pages. To take but one example, Schaller's discussion of the genitive/dative case-merger (pp. 134-141), we find the statement that the dative in Modern Greek "in der Volkssprache mit dem Genetiv zusammengefallen ist". This is certainly true, but only insofar as certain of the functions of the earlier dative are concerned, in particular, the dative as a

marking for indirect objects. Other earlier dative functions, e.g. marking the object of certain prepositions, have been assumed by the accusative case, and even the indirect object marking function has found another, analytic, replacement in the use of the preposition *se* 'to; in; at'. Moreover, there was no formal merger of dative with genitive, only this (partial) functional one. Thus while Greek does fall in line with this pan-Balkan feature, it is oversimplifying things considerably to merely report on the "falling together of genitive and dative in Greek". Furthermore, failing to note the Greek preposition indirect object with *se* misses a structural parallel in the nominal system (noted by Sandfeld though perhaps of somewhat limited significance) with similar prepositionally marked indirect objects in other languages (cf. the use of Bulgarian *na* and Romanian *la*). Similar comments as well could be made about the other Balkan features presented.

Finally, we must take note of Schaller's Chapter 5 (pp. 109-122), in which he discusses the question of the origin of the Balkan *Sprachbund* and addresses the question of causation (also dealt with in his discussion of individual Balkanisms in Chapter 6). To a certain extent, this is the weakest chapter of the book, not for what it does so much as for what it does not do. For example, Schaller gives a good critique of the substratum theory, leaning more toward an adstratal account for most of the pan-Balkan features. However, at no time does he address the question of what it really means for two languages to be in contact with one another. Most Balkanists, and Schaller here is no exception, treat language contact as something that happens between languages in the abstract (evidenced by facile references to "influence of language X over Y" or "contact between language X and language Y") without realizing, so it seems, that it is not different languages *per se* that are in contact but rather it is speakers of different languages who are in contact with one another, through the exigencies of war, trade, animal herding, life in bi- or multi-lingual communities, etc. Thus there is an entire sociolinguistic dimension to the Balkan *Sprachbund* which must be confronted and investigated by Balkanists;³ only through an understanding of such matters, I would argue, can we reach a full understanding of what brought the *Sprachbund* into existence and what led to the observable, and undeniably real, parallels among the languages of the Balkans. Schaller does make a few remarks in this direction (e.g. on pp. 118-119 where he discusses adstratal influence with some reference to bilingualism), but does not allow these observations to lead anywhere.

3. Haarmaan 1978, although treating a geographical region that is only peripheral to the Balkans in the strictest sense, is a noteworthy exception.

I have at times here been critical of Schaller's book, as a reviewer necessarily must be, and it is only fair to point out that some of the flaws in the book that I have drawn attention to are perhaps to be expected in a work which has such an ambitious goal and which attempts to fulfill that goal in handbook-fashion, sacrificing detail to conciseness. And, it must be said that Schaller has done a real service to Balkanists in producing this new handbook with its generally judicious summations of facts and of opinions. To a large extent, what Schaller's book shows us is not just how much we know about Balkan linguistics and the Balkan languages in general, but how much we do not yet know. Schaller's discussions reveal, among other things, that historical studies of object doubling via pronominal clitics in the Balkan languages are sorely lacking, that a complete understanding of the social situation in the period between approximately 800 A.D. and 1700 A.D. that gave rise to the Balkan *Sprachbund* still escapes us, and that detailed (i.e. book-length) descriptions and investigations of the distribution and causes of each and every putative Balkanism⁴ remain to be done. Thus, the final word has probably not been said on any aspect of Balkan linguistics, and we can anticipate a continued vigor for *Balkanphilologie* in the years to come.

4. If I may be permitted a brief immodesty, I would like to think that my work on the infinitive (i.e. Joseph 1983) at least approaches what is needed for each potential Balkanism.

References

- BEVINGTON, G. 1977. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Language* 53.702-704.
- BORETZKY, N. 1976. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Kratylos* 21.52-59.
- FRIEDMAN, V. 1981. "Grammatical Categories and a Comparative Balkan Grammar", manuscript of lecture delivered at the Freie Universität Berlin.
- GĂLĂBOV, I. 1966. "Bălgarski nomina agentis kato prilagatelni v rumănski i albanski", *Bălgarski ezik* 16.299-313.
- 1977. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Zeitschrift für Balkanologie* 13.205-222.
- HAARMANN, H. 1978. *Balkanlinguistik* (2). *Studien zur interlingualen Soziolinguistik des Moldauischen* (Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik 94). Tübingen.
- HULD, M. 1983. *Basic Albanian Etymologies*. Columbus.
- JAKOBY, W. 1976. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Kritikon Litterarum* 5.275-276.
- JOSEPH, B. 1983. *The Synchrony and Diachrony of the Balkan Infinitive. A Study in Areal, General, and Historical Linguistics*. Cambridge (Cambridge Studies in Linguistics, Supplementary Volume.)
- KATIČIĆ, R. 1976. *Ancient Languages of the Balkans*. Part One. The Hague. (Trends in Linguistics, State-of-the-Art Reports 4.)
- KURZOVÁ, H. 1977. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Listy filologické* 100.39.
- MIHĂESCU, H. 1977. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Revue des Études sud-est européennes* 15.383-386.
- SANDFELD, K. 1926. *Balkanfilologien: en oversigt over dens resultater og problemer*. Copenhagen.
- 1930. *Linguistique balkanique. Problèmes et résultats*. Paris.
- SARAMANDU, N. 1979. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Studii și cercetări lingvistice* 30.174.177.

- SCHALLER, H. 1977. *Bibliographie zur Balkanphilologie*. Heidelberg.
- SMRČKOVÁ, J. 1980. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, and of *Bibliographie zur Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Slavica*. 44.145-147.
- SOLTA, G. 1977. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Die Sprache* 23.180-182.
- THOMAS, G. 1978. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, and of *Bibliographie zur Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 20.598-599.
- TRUMMER, M. 1977. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Anzeiger für slavische Philologie* 9.462-467.
- ZETT, R. 1978. Review of *Die Balkansprachen. Eine Einführung in die Balkanphilologie*, and of *Bibliographie zur Balkanphilologie*, by Helmut Schaller. *Südost-Forschungen* 37.238-244.