

## Contact-induced retention in the Balkans: The role of migration, religion, and identity

While language contact is more frequently viewed as a source of innovation and convergence, some studies point to contact as potentially responsible for retention of structural patterns (Sikkenga 1993, Breu 1994, 2011, 2019, Marra 2005). In this paper, evidence for such retention is presented with regard to changes in the temporal-aspectual systems of four Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian (BCMS) communities, each of which migrated out of their original home locations, coming into contact with other Balkan varieties. It should be noted that South Slavic languages show varying levels of retention of the old aorists and imperfects, depending especially on geographical location: central and southern varieties maintain these categories more fully, with aorists surviving better than imperfects. The influence of Greek is in evidence here, with its prestigious status in the region and its array of past tense categories. However, this influence of Greek becomes weaker north of the Danube: many BCMS varieties lose their imperfects north of this river, and decrease or even lose their aorists there, as well.

Beginning in the fourteenth century, Ottoman incursions into the Balkans brought about migrations of BCMS populations into new territories, leading to contact among various Balkan populations. Among these were the following (Ivić 1958: 278-83):

- In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the residents of Catholic Karaševo moved from Serbia into Romania, but remained isolated from the surrounding communities. They still keep a remnant aorist, even though the community is located north of the Danube.
- In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the residents of Catholic Rekaš and neighboring Orthodox Crna Gora likewise moved from Serbia into Romania, but both communities integrated more fully into the surrounding community. They have each lost both the imperfect and the aorist, and have acquired many other features of neighboring varieties.
- Between 1550 and 1650, the residents of Orthodox Gallipoli moved from Serbia into Macedonia. They have maintained both the aorist and the imperfect, and have acquired a number of Greek and Turkish features.

What these examples illustrate is the significance of micro-level motivations—religious affiliations and allegiances, social cohesion of communities, the level of integration into the new community, etc.—alongside macro-level forces—the exigencies of migration, the operation, of socio-political pressures—in influencing the path that each of these communities would follow in the development of their temporal-aspectual systems. Of special interest to us here is the fact that some of these developments—in this case, those in communities who migrated to the south—fostered the retention of features already present in the variety rather than innovative features—what Breu (2011) calls “pertinacity due to language contact.”

This paper explores in detail the evidence for these innovative and retentive outcomes, seeking explanation in socio-historical factors such as religious affiliation, ethnic identity, the level of integration into the new community, and the “roofing” effect of prestigious varieties.

## References

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