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NOTES ON A HISTORY OF LINGUISTIC DIFFERENTIATION (MACEDONIAN VS. BULGARIAN)

After providing an outline of the process of differentiation between Bulgarian and Macedonian, the author presents an historical overview of the standpoints of the most eminent linguists from before World War II (even before the official codification of Macedonian) to the present, who hold Macedonian to be an individually formed language in relation to Bulgarian. Such differences of systemic character indicate that Macedonian developed differently and differentiated itself continually over the centuries from Bulgarian. In this sense, they are two autochthonous entities, two diasystems, which due to a series of geographical, social, cultural-historical, language contact factors from the very beginning began to differentiate within the South Slavic and Balkan context, i.e. to develop from two Old Slavonic variants, that diverged further through the process of Balkanization which was radical and primary in Macedonian, i.e. central in contrast to the Bulgarian situation, and ultimately gave rise to two separate literary standards.

0. Introduction

Macedonian and Bulgarian are closely connected both genealogically within the eastern subgroup of the South Slavic languages and typologically within the language contact processes that gave rise to the Balkan Sprachbund¹, (Balkan Linguistic Alliance or Balkan Linguistic League).

For linguists (or rather “political linguists”), in their vast majority of Bulgarian provenience who approach superficially the question of the relationship between Macedonian and Bulgarian, quite often motivated by the political and nationalist necessities and aspirations of the day, this closeness between the two languages is sufficient for

¹The Balkan Sprachbund refers to common linguistic (mainly morphosyntactic) features [Balkanisms], shared by the Balkan languages that came about as a result of their convergent development and that are not a result of common origin. Some of these features are the decline and loss of the infinitive, the limitation and loss of the case systems, the development of a definite article, analytical comparison of adjectives, the reduplication of the object, etc. There are also very close numerous parallels at the level of phraseology. It includes Albanian, Aromanian, Romanian, Modern Greek, Bulgarian, Macedonian and the Serbian Torlak dialects. Some scholars include in it, marginally, Turkish and the Balkan dialects of Romany. For a comprehensive synthesis of the development of Balkan linguistics and an extensive overview of the Balkan linguistic processes see e.g. Banfi 1985.

them to propose a hierarchy in which the Macedonian language is a derivative of Bulgarian, that is, that Macedonian is a variant, i.e. more precisely a “written-regional variant” of the Bulgarian language. This nationalist approach that has little to do with linguistic or sociolinguistic science (and goes contrary to established facts in modern scholarship, which accepts the individuality of both languages), intentionally overlooks and minimizes the essential linguistic and sociolinguistic differences between the two languages that are of systemic character, and that have resulted in their separate development.

We will draw initially the contours of the linguistic frame within which Bulgarian and Macedonian exist and mark their objective correlations, and then look at the more general sociolinguistic aspects of this question.

1. Linguistic differentiation

At the level of linguistic geography (dialectal distribution) apart from the convergent processes which were due to intensive communicative interaction and necessity, widespread bilingualism and polylingualism, and the dynamic historical currents on the one hand, on the other, the Balkan terrain was conducive since ancient times (with its geographical configuration) to territorial linguistic differentiation.²

The differentiation between the Macedonian and Bulgarian diasystems appears very early on the historical plane, after the process of disintegration of Common Slavic (which was essentially completed towards the end of the first millennium CE), i.e. at a time when all subsequent separate Slavic languages were starting to take shape. These differences are attested in the earliest Old Church Slavonic monuments and take the form of different redactions that begin to incorporate or superimpose dialectal regional traits into the canonical texts. One earliest highly important phonetic process is the so-called vocalization of the ultra-short vowels, the *yers*. The Macedonian reflexes ъ > o, ь > e, characteristic historically for the vast majority of Macedonian dialects are a specific Macedonian trait within the South Slavic complex. This vocalization marks the last Common Slavic (CS) process before the definitive disintegration of the Common Slavic linguistic community and it is one of the first major points of differentiation among the Slavic languages in the results obtained from it. The fact that within a Common Slavic process, we already see the differentiation between Macedonian and Bulgarian, undoubtedly points to a very early delimitation, in which the two linguistic complexes diverge from a Common Slavic base. There are also other phonetic processes that went in the same direction of demarcation – the reflexes of the CS groups *tj > k', *dj > g', generally in Macedonian as opposed to the predominance of *tj > št and *dj > žd in Bulgarian, the subsequent development of the back nasal, the so-called “mixing of nasals”, the continuants of *yat* etc.³

² For example, the largest Macedonian river, Vardar, that essentially divides the lower Balkans in two, always represented a geographical factor that would have been a cause of linguistic divergence and differentiation. This is also the case with the mountain configuration of the Balkans.

³ For further elaboration of the early differential phonetic processes between Macedonian and Bulgarian see also Vidoeski 1998: 11, who outlines other traits like: the appearance in Macedonian dialects of the prothetic vowel j, the identical continuant of OCS *yat* and the front nasal > e, the depalatalization of the old palatals, and later the loss of x, yodation of certain consonant groups, etc.

It is well known that in the Slavic South appear very early two differentiated and specific medieval literary schools – the Ohrid School in Macedonia (e.g. characterized by stricter adherence to the canonical texts, the use of the glagolitic alphabet) and the Preslav School in Bulgaria (Vaillant 1948: 12, proposes to speak of Old Macedonian traits vs. Old Bulgarian traits in connection with this.) We should also bear in mind that in this period, Macedonia was the cultural and civilization focal point that had a force of attraction for the Eastern (Bulgarian) complex and influenced it considerably. The role of the Archbishopric of Ohrid must never be underestimated in this respect. The existence of a Macedonian redaction of Old Church Slavonic⁴ points to a vernacular, a dialectal base which was already undergoing a process of differentiation that was manifesting itself very early in writing.

Scholarship in Slavic studies has always pointed to this early differentiation. Vatroslav Jagić, a major figure in the earlier development of Slavic historical linguistics (in 1898: 111) and later Vaillant, as highlighted by Lunt⁵ (1984: 111), on the basis of specific phonological and lexical differences, “distinguish carefully between the western (or Macedonian) OCS [Old Church Slavonic] of the glagolitic manuscripts and the eastern (or Bulgarian) OCS [Old Church Slavonic]”. Lunt further asserts: “No serious scholar denies the overall distinctive typological features linking all dialects of Macedonia with all dialects of Bulgaria in opposition to the rest of Slavdom. Nonetheless, I maintain that the roots of Macedonian linguistic individuality go back to the oldest manuscripts, and I see no reason for not calling such ancient dialects Macedonian”. (1984: 111).

It should be highlighted that on the synchronic level, linguistic scholarship was stressing the differentiation between Macedonian and Bulgarian even before the completion of the standardisation process in Macedonian and its definitive codification after World War II. (In Macedonia itself, the first contrastive philological outline between the Macedonian and the Bulgarian dialects was made by Parteni Zografski (1858, q. in Koneski 1986: 104).

The most eminent French Indoeuropeanist, Antoine Meillet (1928: 132-133) stated early this century his assessment that the Macedonian dialects were neither Serbian, nor Bulgarian: “In reality these dialects do not properly belong to either the one or the other of the two groups [N.B. Serbian or Bulgarian] under dispute.”

The renowned French Slavist, Andre Vaillant, also at a time when Macedonian had no societal status in any of the regions of tripartioned Macedonia (under Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek rule) emphasized the separate development of a Macedonian literary language in the XIX century: “...there existed in the XIX century a Macedonian literary language [...] based on dialects which naturally differ among themselves [that] had not had the time for unification. But its centres were Skopje, Tetovo, Ohrid, Bitola (Manastir), Voden, etc” (Vaillant 1938: 195).

The Polish scholar M. Małecki, who had done extensive fieldwork in Macedonia in the area of Macedonian dialectology, also prior to the official codification of Macedonian,

⁴ Some authors speak of a Macedonian-Bulgarian redaction, but immediately indicate that “there are more particular phenomena which distinguish the Macedonian texts from the Bulgarian ones.” (Picchio 1980: 19-20).

⁵ Horace Lunt, a long time professor of Slavic Studies at Harvard University and one of the foremost authorities on Old Church Slavonic and the author of the first Macedonian structuralist grammar (Lunt 1952).

pointed to fully individual features of Macedonian that are not found in either Bulgarian or Serbian. This led him to say (Mačeki, 1938: 142) “in regard to the question whether the Macedonian dialects are Serbian or Bulgarian, I would answer that they are not entirely either Serbian or Bulgarian, but that most of them belong to an individual dialect type (which may be called the Macedonian language)...”.

In this same pre-codification period, the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* (GSE 1938) introduced a special entry for the Macedonian language (written by the eminent Slavist S.B. Bernštejn) where once again the coherence of the Macedonian linguistic traits is emphasized. “Regardless of the significant dialectal diversity, the Macedonian dialects are a unit and are noticeably distinct from the national dialects of Thrace, the Rhodope mountains, Mysia and the Balkan Mountains” (GSE 1938: 743). Bernštejn goes on to list ten major distinctive features and processes on all linguistic levels that are distinctive of the Macedonian language.

We will expand somewhat on some of these Macedonian differential traits in regard to Bulgarian.

The major differences in the development of the diasystemic (dialectal) base between the two languages can be seen most clearly in the prosodic system, i.e. in the accent, which is fundamentally different – Macedonian accent is fixed antepenultimate and phraseological, whereas Bulgarian accent is free, with clear ‘isoprosodemes’ of systemic territorial differentiation. Such a systemic divergence shows that Bulgarian dialects underwent different processes of development as opposed to the Macedonian dialects, which ultimately gave rise to the linguistic situation that obtains today.

These examples on the phonetic plane are only illustrative and well known in linguistic science – if we decided to go into details we would be able to see the general coherence and systematicity of the processes that shaped and differentiated the Macedonian language. [See also e.g. Cubberley’s (1988) computer assisted comparative phonetic study of vocalic [r] in the Slavic languages, where the Macedonian development is shown to be distinct both from Bulgarian and Serbo-Croatian (Cubberley 1988: 12).]

Bulgarian and a very small number of German linguists frequently, in order to “prove” the Bulgarian character of Macedonian, pick a dialectal trait at random and show that it is present in some Bulgarian dialects – and this is enough for them to establish the inextricable interconnectedness of the two languages, i.e. rather the “Bulgarian character” of Macedonian. This linguistic atomism, long surpassed in linguistics is carried to absurd lengths. If we were to apply this unscientific, or rather, para-scientific reasoning to the other Slavic languages we could reach far-fetched and absurd conclusions. Could we say, by this logic, that Slovenian is a dialect of Russian (or vice-versa) because they have the same reflex *tj > č? Does Macedonian belong to the East Slavonic languages because the process of vocalization of the *yers* gave an identical result? Are Macedonian and Bulgarian to be considered West Slavic dialects with the phonetic change ъ > e? Are the Macedonian SouthWestern dialects to be seen as dialects of Polish and Kashubian because they retain the nasal element of the old nasal vowels? Or even more absurd, with the change o > o, is the Western Macedonian Galičnik dialect a dialect of Slovenian in sharing that trait, and not much further away the Ohrid dialect with the change o > a, a dialect of Bulgarian?

Such absurd and unscientific conclusions, a product of an utterly flawed methodology resuscitated by Bulgarian linguists, have been rejected firmly by linguistic science.

They are the product of a futile, unscientific atomism which, if applied generally across the Slavic languages, would have a retrograde effect on Slavic linguistics that would take it back two centuries.

Bulgarian linguists regretfully wilfully neglect the axiom of every modern linguistic analysis, which is to categorise the phenomena by considering the general structure, function and position within the systemic correlations of a particular language or diasystem, prior to making any comparisons with other linguistic systems.

Unfortunately in spite of the fact that such flawed theoretical foundations, manifested in the collective attack in 1978 (*Georgiev 1978) on the Macedonian language by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, in the text "The unity of the Bulgarian language in the past and today", where Macedonian is proclaimed to be "a written regional variant of Bulgarian", have been denounced in Slavic linguistics⁶, this appropriation of Macedonian still remains the basic Bulgarian approach. In spite of the well argued and internationally well received reply by Macedonian linguists (Dimitrovski *et al* 1978), in the most recent synthetic Bulgarian sociolinguistic elaboration, part of a major comparative Polish project on the sociolinguistic changes in the Slavic languages from 1945-1995, the linguists who have authored the Bulgarian volume, almost all of them members of the Institute of Bulgarian Language of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, still consider this Bulgarian pamphlet to be the last and final word on the subject – see Dimitrova (1997: 151) [(as regards the "variants") and p. 161, in regard to the Macedonian dialects as part of the Bulgarian diasystem].

It is curious, given the fact that contemporary Bulgarian linguists consider all Macedonian linguistic data as Bulgarian, that they have not devoted any serious attention to its study, nor have they presented any of its linguistic characteristics in their work (comparative, contrastive or otherwise). This indicates that indirectly, at the level of specific linguistic analysis, they recognize that the linguistic study of Macedonian and the language itself are not part of Bulgarian studies, i.e. that Macedonian is a separate language.

Thus, Bulgarian linguists, even though not as vocal, vehement and explicit as before, essentially still maintain that the Macedonian dialects are Bulgarian and that the Macedonian standard language is simply a variant of Bulgarian. This is in spite of notable, albeit isolated, earlier examples in Bulgarian scholarship, where the separate identity of the Macedonian standard was recognized, like in the textbook in comparative Slavic linguistics by the prominent Bulgarian Slavist, Ivan Lekov (1958: 3-4), where it was represented with texts and vocabularies, on a par with the other Slavonic languages.

Similar manipulation with established linguistic facts takes place also at the level of Balkan linguistics. It is well known that the Macedonian diasystem is located in the focal point of the Balkan linguistic processes, in the strongest zone of a four-way language contact (with Albanian, Aromanian and Greek), whereas Bulgarian was shaped mainly in contact with Romanian and to a lesser degree with Greek, i.e. in a second, less intensive wave of Balkanization. Many innovation phenomena in Bulgarian actually appeared or were strengthened under the influence of the Macedonian Balkan focal point.

⁶ Lunt assesses this programmatic paper, which has been the Bulgarian national doctrine on the Macedonian language since 1978, as "incompetent in terms of linguistic theory, and resting on a poorly organized series of propositions and claims, many of them dubious, exaggerated or false" (Lunt 1978: 87-88), and further as an "embarrassing aberration from common sense and sound scholarship".

However, some linguists tend to present very superficially the Balkanistic processes in the Macedonian and in the Bulgarian languages. For them it is sufficient to list that, for example, both Macedonian and Bulgarian have lost the old infinitive, that they double their objects, have a postposed article, distinguish the category of evidentiality, and then to conclude on the basis of this that these processes make them identical.

Nevertheless, Balkanological and contrastive studies show at this level as well important **systemic** differences (see e.g. De Bray 1976, De Bray 1980, Englund 1977, Friedman 1997, Usikova 1995). One major recent collection of confrontative (i.e. contrastive), Macedonian-Bulgarian studies which reveal further systemic divergences is Topolińska, 1996.) We will present only a few examples.

It is accurate to state that both languages have lost the infinitive, but Bulgarian retains certain relic forms, and what is more important, in the Bulgarian verbal system, the category of non-finiteness does not have systemic manifestation, in opposition to its clear delimitation in Macedonian (see the argumentation in Joseph 1983: 130-131). The completely divergent development of the Macedonian and Bulgarian participial systems, the gerund and the verbal noun (see the extensive analysis in Čašule 1998) indicates that they differ considerably in a whole verbal subsystem – the Macedonian non-finite system is positioned entirely different to Bulgarian, it is innovative, it was completely re-structured and became more highly Balkanized. Thus the difference is not in the degree of actualisation of certain Balkan processes, but in their systemic foundation, causation and results. What seems superficially as symptomatic of linguistic unity, in fact, uncovers systemic differentiation, and in order to achieve such systemic differentiation especially in morphology and syntax, very strong divergent factors and processes must have been at play.

This is even more visible in another of the major Balkanisms, the reduplication of the objects. Some scholars will note superficially that both languages have essentially the same syntactic structure, with a passing remark that the reduplication is not mandatory in Bulgarian in opposition to the consistency and obligatoriness in Macedonian. This gives the false impression, as with other characteristics, that the difference is slight and of a stylistic nature.

However, more precise Balkanological studies in regard to this Balkanism, after taking into account all the structurally and functionally relevant factors, reach the conclusion that this phenomenon in Macedonian and Bulgarian obtains an entirely different systemic status. Thus, the French linguist Creissels (1978: 64) concludes that the reduplication in Macedonian, by “incorporation d’indices” in the verbal form, makes it necessary to single out Macedonian typologically, isolated in a separate group of its own, not only setting it apart from the other Balkan non-Slavic languages, but also quite distinctly and directly opposite to Bulgarian.⁷ In this respect we should also note the differences in word order in connection with this Balkanism (especially the “Mediterraneanism” of the absolute fronting of the clitics – for a discussion on the Mediterranean distribution of this trait see Sawicka 1997: 76-77), which shows systematic divergence between Macedonian and Bulgarian.

The compound (periphrastic) tenses with the auxiliary verb **ima** ‘to have’ in Macedonian also represent a major differential system between the two languages. Bulgarian

⁷ For further elaboration see Čašule 1997.

linguists gravely underestimate the scope of such a divergent development. Macedonian, in the Balkan context, has developed a full paradigm of resultative tenses (*present perfect*, *past perfect*, *past indefinite perfect*, *future perfect*, *future-in-the-past*, *future renarrated*)⁸ with this auxiliary which have spread quickly from the South-Western focal point through the literary language to most dialectal regions and are a specific trait of Macedonian in opposition to their marked absence in Bulgarian.

We should also point out the definite article – while both languages have the same type of postpositive article that sets them aside from all the other Slavic languages, the Macedonian article distinguishes three series (-v, -t, -n) depending on the closeness of the object to the speaker, whereas Bulgarian has only one such (-t) series.

Such differences of systemic character (and we have outlined only a limited number of them) indicate that the Macedonian linguistic complex developed differently and differentiated itself continually over the centuries in opposition to the Bulgarian linguistic complex. In this sense, we cannot speak of a “breaking away” of Macedonian from the “unity of the Bulgarian language in the past and today”, but of two autochthonous entities, two diasystems, which due to a series of geographical, societal, cultural-historical, language contact factors from the very beginning began to differentiate within the South Slavic and Balkan context, i.e. to develop from two Old Slavonic variants, which diverged further through the process of Balkanization which was radical and primary in Macedonian, i.e. central in contrast to the Bulgarian situation.

There is a host of other factors that have caused this divergent development, especially in more recent times, such as the relationship towards tradition and the popular language (where Macedonian is directly linked to the processes and tendencies active in the vernacular and Bulgarian is more conservative in going the way of a significantly more pronounced de-Balkanization), the marked Russian and Church Slavonic influence in Bulgarian which did not gain ground in Macedonian, as well as highly relevant elements of compact differentiation at the lexical level (not only in abstract and specialised vocabulary, but also in core vocabulary⁹). A most recent acknowledgment of the high degree of differentiation in the area of vocabulary comes from the Bulgarian poet Rumen Leonidov, the author and one of the translators of the first anthology (Leonidov, 1998) of modern Macedonian poetry in Bulgarian, who, speaking of the difficulties in translating from Macedonian stated (in an interview – Kletnikov, 1998: 35) that “however much our patriots are not willing to believe it” the Macedonian literary language has diverged so much from Bulgarian that the Bulgarian translators needed to use Macedonian-French, Macedonian-Russian dictionaries and even ask the Macedonian poets directly in order to be able to render the poetry adequately into Bulgarian. This anthology is also important in that it is the first Bulgarian book where it is explicitly stated that the poetry was “translated from the Macedonian language”.

It must be noted however, that it does not necessarily follow that in all language situations with such a level of differentiation as the one we have postulated for Macedonian and Bulgarian, the end result will be two separate languages.¹⁰ On the other hand, the

⁸ For a detailed analysis and discussion of these forms, see Friedman 1977.

⁹ For a recent analysis of an example of compact divergence on the lexical level, see Čašule (in print).

¹⁰ Note for example the high divergence among the dialects of German, which has not given rise to different standards, but which still manages to fuel Bavarian separatism.

consistent process of differentiation is of such magnitude, that it provides more than sufficient solid grounds for a distinct development, which is what has occurred in the case of standard Macedonian and Bulgarian and it is a reality that is fully acknowledged in modern scholarship.¹¹

2. Sociolinguistic aspects

The sociolinguistic argumentation, in particular in regard to the divergent development in the standardisation of both languages is even stronger and enjoys acceptance in all linguistic and Slavic scholarship outside of Bulgaria. There are a number of relevant studies on this topic, like the excellent overview of the sociolinguistic situation in regard to the standardization of Macedonian by Friedman (1985) or the extensive outline of the processes of standardisation in the South Slavonic languages by Hill (1992), and in particular for Macedonian by Čašule (1996), or the first hand-account, synthesis and assessment (almost fifty years later) of the definitive codification of Macedonian standard by the main protagonist in this process and the founder of Macedonian linguistics, Blaže Koneski (1993). For a detailed, objective and critical contrast of the sociolinguistic situation of the Macedonian and Bulgarian languages, see the study by Lunt (1984).¹²

All of these sources highlight the successful and exemplary codification of the Macedonian standard on the basis of the Western Macedonian central dialects, and stress the quick acceptance and the accelerated development of the Macedonian literary language, which fulfills today all the functions of a national standard. In fact, Lunt (1953: 372-373) expressed very early his amazement and admiration for the fact that already by 1951, even before the publication of the *Makedonski pravopis (Macedonian Orthography)* “the language had achieved a remarkable uniformity and almost universal acceptance”, whereas Friedman (1994) points that the codification of Macedonian should be seen as a sociolinguistic showcase. (See also Hill 1992: 139, who states that the “affirmation” of the Macedonian standard language “appears assured”.)

The firm and motivated foundation of the Macedonian standard language, the careful and systemically-based codification conditioned by the consistent historical sociolinguistic process of the selection of the norm (begun in the XIX century), the constant reference to language usage and to synthesis within the Macedonian diasystem, contributed not only to a quick, but also to an efficient, acceptance and implementation of the linguistic norm in the Post-World War II period in the Republic of Macedonia.

A most powerful factor in the development of the literary language was the outstanding aesthetic achievements of modern Macedonian literature. In all literary genres, as well as in the absorption of the most significant literary works of world literature through their translation into Macedonian, the literary language showed itself to be a well-developed

¹¹ An interesting overview of the treatment of the Macedonian nation and language in more than 40 British and North American reference books can be found in Shashko (1995: 228), who states that “the majority of American and British scholars recognize that today there is a separate Macedonian people with a distinct self-identity, national consciousness and national state” and further “The majority of scholars ... affirm today there is a viable Macedonian standard language.”

¹² Note also Topolińska (1998), i.e. Volume 131 of the *Journal of the Sociology of Language*, dedicated to the sociolinguistics of Macedonian.

and finely tuned instrument with unlimited creative potential. The high poetic value of Macedonian literature should be seen as closely related to the successful process of codification and the basic principles placed in the foundations of the literary language. Only a language which is able to achieve a synthesis between its tradition and its present and between the different segments and groups of its diasystem can articulate a literary “eruption” of such magnitude and worth, which then reciprocally and creatively influences the linguistic development.

Today, the Macedonian literary language is more than ever a uniting factor among Macedonians from all parts of Macedonia (of particular significance is its acceptance among the Macedonian nationality in Aegean Macedonia, in Greece) and in the so-called diaspora, and, as a continuation of the Macedonian linguistic development over the centuries, is a powerful link with the past and the future. The fact that it highly successfully fulfils this role is due to an immaculate process of codification and standardisation. (See the discussion in Čašule 1996.)

We should state that Macedonian entirely satisfies the criteria for a fully developed standard language put forward by Bulgarian linguists themselves in regard to Bulgarian (Dimitrova, 1997: 163-164): its norm is elaborated, supradialectal, stable, obligatory for all that have competence in it, and it is characterized by stylistic differentiation, polyfunctionality (used in culture, science, literature, production, administration), it has oral and written variation, high social prestige and a wide social foundation of users. Nevertheless, Bulgarian politics, and unfortunately, hand in hand with it, Bulgarian linguists could never discern and accept that the Macedonian language developed and grew along a natural road of its own both in the pre-standardisation and especially in the period of standardisation. The highly successful and swift standardisation and codification of Macedonian, which is cited as an example in sociolinguistic studies is the clearest evidence for the coherence and historical consistency of the development of the Macedonian language.

3. Perspectives for the future

The Bulgarian and Macedonian people will never be able to approach each other as long as the Bulgarian idea, or rather, illusion (also fostered in certain German circles¹³) of the “confused and deceived, unconscious and primitive” Macedonians that in “favourable” societal circumstances can quickly be transformed into Bulgarians, is thoroughly rejected and surpassed. This patronising and chauvinistic Bulgarian policy brought about an excessive alienation between the two nations, which makes impossible the essential and necessary cultural and social cooperation. At the moment, for example, a score of highly important agreements and accords between Bulgaria and Macedonia have not been signed because of this so-called “language dispute”, where signing them in both languages is feared by the Bulgarian side as an official legitimization of the individuality of the Macedonian language.

In negating the Macedonian language, Bulgarian linguists go against the position in world linguistics and sociolinguistics, for which it is an undisputed fact and entity, satis-

¹³ Notable in this respect is Kronsteiner, as exemplified in Kronsteiner (1996: 203-211). See also Vidoeski's (1995) assessment of these ‘theories’.

fyng all criteria established in linguistic science. Together with Bulgarian politicians, they do not have a “language dispute” with Macedonia and Macedonians, but are in conflict not only with the specialists, but also with what is already part of a common body of knowledge.

Macedonian and Bulgarian are closely related languages, with common roots, in a correlation similar to the one that exists between Spanish and Portuguese or Spanish and Italian, and more differentiated than the Scandinavian languages. However, just as is the case with these Romance languages, they have developed independently into two compact linguistic systems that *did not develop out of each other, but next to each other*. This signifies that they are by no means in a hierarchical relationship, but fully on an equal footing.

The Bulgarian and Macedonian people will be able to build much deeper, significant and creative forms of cooperation for a hopeful future only if the Bulgarian side will acknowledge and respect the historical reality of the Macedonian language as a fully fledged, independent and developed literary and standard language.

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