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Semantic Evolution of Some Greek Loans in Serbo-Croatian*

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Contemporary study of Greek loan-words in Serbo-Croatian is like a race with time. Standard, i.e. literary (and not so numerous) Grecisms have already been recognized and given a more or less satisfactory interpretation (VASMER, POPOVIĆ, SKOK). Unfortunately, the southeastern parts of the SCr. language territory, which used to be in closest contact with the Greek language, have been described in dictionaries only in recent years, when specific dialectal features had already been significantly neutralized under the influence of the standard language. The first victim of this neutralization is lexicon¹.

Since an appeal has already been made for contemporary contributions to Balkan linguistics to be made in the study of lexicon (DESNICKAJA 1988:131), we have approached this inquiry with two ends in mind: to point at some hitherto unregistered Grecisms in SCr. and then, departing from the domestic situation we are best familiar with, to propose what appears to us to be the most adequate model for the study of Greek (or any other) lexicon in all Balkan languages.

We are aware of the fact that possibilities for studying SCr. Grecisms by means of an extension of their inventory have already been exhausted, so we shall try something else: we will go into a more detailed analysis of well-known Grecisms from the standpoint of the contemporary theory of languages in contact. We will focus on the semantic adaptation of Greek loan-words in Serbo-Croatian. Loan-words we define as foreign words which have entered a certain language so long ago as to be able to undergo not only phonetic and morphological adaptations, but also to be subject to semantic evolution within the new language. They can be derivationally so productive as to surpass the limits of the grammatical categories they were originally loaned to². In other words, they can be identified with the category which Desnickaja labels as ethno-historical loans that result not only

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¹ Grecisms in southeastern dialects, as they are found in the materials from the first half of this century, were studied by POPOVIĆ 1953 (and later), and we have described a few interesting examples from recent dictionaries in VLAJIĆ-POPOVIĆ/SIKIMIĆ 1990.

² They are essentially different from the relatively similar category of *learned foreign words* which are generally recent loans that preserve their original phonetic, morphological and semantic features to a maximal extent. In the domain of lexical borrowing we also discriminate between the categories of *semantic loans* (which are the result of a certain broadening of the meaning of a word in a language after the model in another language), and *loan translations* (new formations, creation of hitherto non-existent words in a language after the model in a foreign language) (CREPAJAC 1978:75-77), but these are presently beyond our interest.

in the creation of synonymous doublets, but also in the suppression of domestic lexemes (DESNICKAJA 1988:134).

In the theory of languages in contact a fairly simple basic division into primary and secondary semantic adaptations was made (FILIPOVIĆ 1986:65–67, 155ff.) which has proved practical and operational for our purposes as well.

Primary semantic adaptation (PSA) occurs at the moment of transfer of a word from the giving language into the receiving language, so that the foreign word, the model, often develops a tendency towards restriction of meaning or, more seldom, shows zero semantic extension (ZSE) which implies the absence of differences between the model and the replica.

Secondary semantic adaptation (SSA) occurs after the loan-word is included into the system of the receiving language, this being followed by one or more secondary semantic changes (FILIPOVIĆ 1986:65). It is namely SSA that makes loan-words different from other types of lexical borrowing (cf. note 2).

Minute analysis of SCr. Grecisms – if not quite archaic, they are predominantly dialecticisms, while their portion in the standard language is relatively small – is handicapped by a serious problem: lack of historical dictionaries of the spoken language which would enable us to trace the evolution of meaning precisely, with less speculation.

A vast majority of Grecisms in SCr. have undergone only PSA. Here we are interested in those that have also undergone SSA. Save for a couple of instances of standard language lexemes (*đakònija* and, partly, *ròvit*) the examples we are dealing with are dialectal and already noted in their essential meaning, but their secondarily adapted meanings are hitherto unknown to descriptive and dialectal lexicographies. With the sole exception of *mustać* “corn silk” (recorded in this meaning also in Bulgarian and Rumanian), all of these adaptations are, to the best of our knowledge, peculiar to SCr. and unparalleled in other Balkan languages.

After an analysis of every individual word, we shall try to draw some conclusions potentially relevant for Balkanology as well as for the theory of languages in contact.

SCr. *arnòsan* adj. “crazy, silly, unreliable, mentally incompetent” (Soko Banja, RSANU materials), the past participle of *arnòsati se* “leave alone, let be”. RSANU records only the verb with a different vocalism of the ending, *árnisati se* “to leave, get rid of”, tracing it correctly to Gk. aorist ἀρνήσομαι < ἀρνοῦμαι “to leave”.

This logical SSA (such persons are to be avoided, left alone, etc.) developed only in SCr.³ This semantic development is missing not only in other Balkan languages in which PSA of the verb is attested, Bulg. dial. *арни̇с(в)ам*, *арни̇ша*, (BER I:15), Mac. *арнисвам*, Arum. *arnisèsu* (BUDZISZEWSKA 1983:17), but also in Greek as the giving language.

SCr. *đakònija*, n.f. “fine, selected food; a treat, delicatessen” (RSANU), “cibi delicatiores” (RJAZU), “die Bewirtung, lautitia” (VUK)⁴. This standard and wide-

³ It is noteworthy that the same SCr. verb, Gk. loan *árnisati (se)* has produced another derivative of specific meaning unparalleled in the model language, *árnica* “deserted field” (VLAJIĆ-POPOVIĆ/SIKIMIĆ 1990: 252–3).

⁴ A number of attestations come from his collection of Serbian national poems: “Donesoše vino i rakiju i lijepu svaku đakoniju”, “Lepo ga je dočekala majka, pred njeg nosi slatku

spread word in contemporary SCr. is a SSA probably based on an older, primarily adapted loan, OSerb. *dijakonija* "munus diaconis" (13–14th century)⁵ < MGk. *διακονία* "deacon's order; deacon's service; attendance, with reference to the poor of the church, hence, charity, alms, supply of food" (SOPHOCLES 1887:363).

Given the traditional shortcoming of Balkan linguistics, absence of adequate dictionaries, we can only speculate on what the stages of this change of meaning were. We must employ a sociolinguistic approach and suppose that the present SCr. meaning originated among the poor to whom the food, administered to them as a charity by deacons who were only performing their duty, *đakonija*, appeared to be a feast.

This example of SSA is a case of amelioration of the meaning. FILIPOVIĆ 1986:160 (following the studies of S. ULLMANN and J. LYONS) presents it as a theoretical possibility but claims amelioration absent from the corpus of semantic changes so that the theory of languages in contact deals only with zero stadium and pejoration. Ours is a single example, but it need not necessarily remain the only one, of the opposite, ameliorating process in the development of meaning. In PSA Gk. meanings (listed as 1–5 in SOPHOCLES, loc. cit.) were restricted to only one in SCr. ("munus diaconis"), which was then extended in a process of SSA.

SCr. *jaĝurida* n.m. "miser, hoarder, niggard" (Vranje, Niš, Kragujevac; RSANU). This meaning is the SSA of the frequent dialectal Greek loan *jaĝurida* "unripe, sour grapes; the fruit of wild grapes" (central and south-eastern Serbia). In PSA the loan shows zero semantic adaptation from Gk. *ἄγουρίδα* "fruit of unripe grapes" (itself the result of specialization of meaning of the adjective *ἄγουρος* "unripe"). This Grecism is primarily adapted in all Balkan languages: Bulg. *ягорѹда, азорѹда, азырѹда*, Mak. *азурѹда, јазурѹда, зурѹда*, Alb. *aguridhë*, Arum. *агуридһа*, Rum. *aguridă* (BUDZISZEWSKA 1983:6–7). But in Serbo-Croatian this common Balkan Grecism means also "miser, hoarder". This SSA is the only case of such semantic evolution created metaphorically in the sense of shrinking or clenching one's first just like sour, unripe grapes shrink one's mouth. This development can be compared with the one occurring in SCr. *stǐpsa* "1. alum; 2. metaph. miser, hoarder", or Rum. *zgǐrcit* "miser" < Slav. (*sr̥*)*kr̥čiti* (SKOK I:611–2).

SCr. *kōljivo* n.n. "bread taken to the church and to the cemetery on memorial feast day (All Souls' Day)" (Skopska Crna Gora)⁶. This term is an SSA of the widespread religious and folklore term, standard SCr. *kōljivo* n.n. "cooked wheat blessed by the priest and eaten at the funeral feast" (traced back to MGk.

đakoniju, "Ugosti ga vinom i rakijom, i gospodskom svakom đakonijom", "Sluga nosi vino i rakiju, a Jelica carsku đakoniju" (RJAZU). Modern dictionaries contain examples from western writers (NAZOR, ŠKREB, etc.), although it is quite a common word in the East, too, perhaps even with a touch of colloquiality.

⁵ It is not quite clear from the passage in "Dušan's Code of Laws" whether it is the deacon's service or his ration of food: "*Kaluđerije koji su se postrigbli, topici iz metohije koje crkve, da ne živu u tezij crkve, n̄ da gredu u ine monastyrē i da im se dava dijakonija.*" (RJAZU).

⁶ A. PETROVIĆ, *Srpski etnografski zbornik* 7, Beograd 1907, 444.

κόλλυβον i.e. its plural κόλλυβα “frumentum coctum”, SKOK II:130, VASMER 1944:79). As a religious terminus technicus it is also present in languages of other Orthodox peoples of the Balkans: Bulg. *коливо*, Mac. *коливо*, Rum. *colivă* (BER II:556). In our case, *koljivo* was first metonymically identified with funerals and death in general⁷, so it could denote something else within the range of the same rite (memorial feast) – not only the original specific object (although such ritual terms tend to have a fixed connotation).

Another example of SSA based on the same identification of *koljivo* with funerals in general has occurred in the case of a derived word, SCr. *koljivača* n.f. “a kind of small, crescent-shaped bread prepared for the funeral feast” (Župa and Pomoravlje/central Serbia; RSANU)⁸. Similar suffixation of names for breads made for certain purposes or on special occasions, such as: *badnjača* or *ljetnjača* “bread, pogača (flat, round bread) or cake made for Christmas ...” (Slavonija, RSANU), *probodača* (sc. *pogača*) “pogača made when a child starts waking” (Vlasenica and Zvornik)⁹, *pastupača* (sic!) “... when a child begins to walk, a bread (pogača) is made” (Dinjaš)¹⁰, etc. indicate that in this case *koljivo* is identified with funerals in general.

SCr. *mađerica* n.f. “chamber for a memorial feast at the cemetery” (Leskovac)¹¹, *mađarica* n.f. “chapel”¹² (Kunovo/vicinity of Vranje; RSANU materials). This word is certainly an ultimate Grecism, but it should not be traced back to what appears to be its direct Gk. equivalent, μαγει(τ)όρτσα “cooked food, dish” (SOPHOCLES 1887:726, dating from 9–10th c. A.D.) i.e. “chowder made from lamb’s or kid’s entrails traditionally prepared after Easter festivities” (DEMETRAKOS 1972:873). It is much more likely to be a local SCr. derivative from an older loan, OSerb. *mađer* “a cook” (<Gk. μάγειρος “idem”) which produced the OSerb. *mađernica* “kitchen (in a monastery)” (SKOK II:350). This *mađernica* could phonetically (with a slight and quite common phonetic corruption, loss of an -n-) as well as semantically easily be the basis of the above *mađerica* (further corrupted by vocal assimilation into *mađarica*).

⁷ Phraseology bears witness to this process: *miriše na koljivo* (lit.: he smells of koljivo) “he is about to die”, *nosi koljivo u džepu* (lit.: he is carrying koljivo in his pocket) “he is in poor health, about to die”, *pojesti kome koljivo* (lit.: to eat someone’s koljivo) “to outlive someone” (RSANU s.v. *koljivo*).

⁸ In this particular place in central Serbia the term *panahija* is used to denote what is usually known as *koljivo* (M. MILIĆEVIĆ, *Srpski etnografski zbornik* 17, Beograd 1911, 79), so there was a vacancy left in the meaning of the latter, thus favouring the occurrence of this semantic shift.

⁹ T. DRAGIĆEVIĆ, *Glasnik zemaljskog muzeja* XIX, Sarajevo 1907, 489.

¹⁰ Sv. MARKOV, *Iz sela u selo*, Bukurešt 1984, 222.

¹¹ Б. МИТРОВИЋ, *Речник лесковачког говора*, Лесковац, 1984, 173. This form was discussed in VLAJIĆ-POPOVIĆ/SIKIMIĆ 1990:254, but it was erroneously described as deriving from Gk. μαγειρεία “kitchen”.

¹² It is obvious from the context that it is a funeral chapel: “The church is nice, but the burying grounds and *mađarica* are neglected.” This removes potential doubt that it might be related to the feminine form of the ethnicon *Mađarica* “Hungarian woman” or mean something like “Hungarian chapel” (*Mađarica* < *mađarska kapela*).

Therefore, we suppose the zero extended meaning of OSerb. *mađer* "cook" to have been secondarily semantically adapted into *máđernica*¹³ "(monastic) kitchen" and then further (given the elements of food and vicinity of the church) into "chamber for a memorial feast at the cemetery, chapel".

SCr. *mánga* n. f. "disaster, hell" (Vranje, RSANU materials) in the phrase "*cela naša rabota ode u mángu*" "all our work has gone to hell, was futile, is ruined"¹⁴. We can consider this an SSA of standard colloquial *manga(š)* "rascal, cheater; crafty and shrewd man" (also attested in the same word collection from Vranje in the RSANU materials), a direct loan from Gk. μάγκας "tramp, good-for-nothing", also borrowed by other Balkan languages: Bulg. *mánğa* "tramp", Mac. *манга*, "Gypsy", dial. *манга*, "tramp, Gypsy; criminal" (BUDZISZEWSKA 1983:106). This is a general term of intensive negative connotation, cf. new formations like Bulg. *какамánğa* "cunning person, thief" (BER II:151), SCr. *kakamánga* "prison" (Piroć)¹⁵, although an expected original *κακαμαγκας does not exist in Greek.

SCr. *mustác* n. m. "a piece of land penetrating into the water, promontory" (lower reaches of the Neretva river)¹⁶. This is SSA of the frequent and widespread dialectal SCr. *mústác* "moustache" (SKOK II:488)¹⁷ < Gk. μουστάκι "moustache", borrowed by all the Balkan languages: Bulg. *мустák*, Mac. *мустак*, Rum. *musta'tă*, Alb. *mustáq* (FILIPOVA-BAIROVA 1969:128, TAHOVSKI 1951:27, TIKTIN II: 714, MEYER 1891:293)¹⁸. This word of problematic fixation¹⁹ could have been legitimately disregarded as doubtful if it were not for the semantic inventory of synonymous SCr. *břk* "moustache", which includes "jenes Land, das sich ins Wasser hinein erstreckt" (Srem, Vuk) or "Landzunge" (SCHÜTZ 1957:81).

Elsewhere in the Balkans we find another SSA of this Greek lexeme: SCr. *mustáci* "corn silk" (SKOK II:488), Mac. *мустаки*, Rum. *mustăți* "idem" (BUDZISZEWSKA 1983:115). To the best of our knowledge, this meaning is absent in Greek although it is the most logical metaphor paralleled by SCr. *břk*, pl. *břci* "mous-

¹³ Cf. *mesar* : *mesarnica*; *ribar* : *ribarnica*; *kovač* : *kovačnica*; etc.

¹⁴ In RSANU proper *mánğa* is attested as "Gypsy; tramp; mob" as recorded in the same region (Aleksinac, Vranje, Leskovac, Zorunovac).

¹⁵ Н. Живковић, *Речник пиротског говора*, Пирот 1987, 63.

¹⁶ This ubication is doubtful because it is not recorded in standard SCr. dictionaries (neither RJAZU nor RSANU), but it appears only in a secondary source, BEZLAJ 1967:53. Since he says that "this base is also recorded in toponomastics of this region", he is obviously aware of the village name *Mustác* "a village in Hercegovina, middle of the 18th century" (RJAZU, hapax legomenon), so they cannot be mistaken one for the other. Bezljaj does not quote his source, but it is most likely VASMER II: 647. Both authors (along with PETLEVA 1973:55) are mistaken in considering SCr. *mustác* a derivative of Protoslav. **мысль* "wet(ness)" and relating it to Russ. *мóлость* "непогода, слякоть".

¹⁷ This is not the only case of SSA of this Grecism of enormous (and puzzling, we could say) popularity all over the Balkans: it also designates "corn silk" in SCr., Bulgarian and Rumanian. We could not find evidence of this meaning in Greek itself.

¹⁸ On the Adriatic coast the original Greek second meaning, a nautical term *mustáce* "small boards in a barge" (Vrbnik/the island of Krk; RJAZU) is preserved, probably by Venetian mediation.

¹⁹ VASMER quotes no source and gives no ubication, BEZLAJ gives no reference for his locating it into the lower reaches of the Neretva river.

tache; awn, corn silk”, Rus. *усбі, ўсики* “moustache; awn stem” and other, all based on the general idea of something sharp and/or prominent.

SCr. *póndilo* n. n. “corner, nook; a bunch of trifles” (Lebane, RSANU materials), and *póndila* n. f. “cattle pen” (Skopska Crna Gora; RJAZU), along with Bulg. *пoндѝло* “cattle pen” (FILIPOVA-BAIROVA 1969:143) derive from MGk. *πoντῖλ(ι)o(v)* “partition; bridge-like device; a kind of balcony” (VASMER 1944:120; SOPHOCLES 1887:910 “piece of timber, log”, itself originating from Lat. *pontilis*). Since the word in its PSA is common to SCr. and Bulg., the term can be considered a Balkanism, the SSA being individual to SCr.

SCr. *rófito* adj. n. “loose (of soil which has not settled yet)” (Vranje, RSANU materials). This is a SSA of standard SCr. *ròvít* “soft-boiled (of eggs)” < Gk. *ῥοφιτᾶ (αὐγά)* “drinkable (of eggs)”. It is also borrowed by Bulg. *pòvut, pòfunt* “idem” (FILIPOVA-BAIROVA 1969:149). In Greek, the adjective *ῥοφιτῶς* “drinkable” specializes in describing soft-boiled eggs, and in PSA the SCr. loan adjective is restricted only to this specific use. But in Serbo-Croatian SSA it is another aspect of such eggs (their softness) that prevails, and the meaning is extended to describe almost anything “soft, weak, shaky, unstable”. In standard language it practically specializes in describing a convalescent, or a person of weak health (RMSMH), and in dialectal use soft, shaky soil (see above).

SCr. *vúnija* n. f. “valley, gorge” (Timok; RSANU), a local SSA of the widespread dialectal *vúnija/fúnija* “funnel” (southeastern Serbia), recorded and recognized as a loan from Gk. *χωνί(ov)* “funnel” by POPOVIĆ 1953:210 (missing in SKOK, and VASMER 1944). This is a well-known Balkan Grecism: Bulg. *хунѝя* “funnel” (FILIPOVA-BAIROVA 1969:171)²⁰, Mac. *хунија, фунија, унија* “funnel” (TAHOVSKI 1951:43)²¹, but the shift “funnel” > “gorge” occurs only in SCr. as a SSA²². The same semantic shift was also effectuated in the domestic word *lévak* “funnel; channel”; “cavity, hole narrowed at one end”²³, and it is independently repeated in the case of the homonymous Greek loan.

And finally, let us see how this material could be useful to Balkanology.

²⁰ It is interesting that the only attestation of this form in Bulgarian dialects we could find comes from Moldavia: *Фунѝйка = хунѝчка, Фунија* “funnel” Э. И. ЗЕЛЕНИНА, *Сравнительный тематический словарь трех болгарских сел Молдавии*, Българска диалектология 10, София 1981, 26, 94. Geography could be an argument in favour of the Turkish origin, but semantics is against it.

²¹ He supposes the Macedonian forms to be borrowed directly from Turkish, but this should be doubted since the Turkish word *funya* is only recorded in the meaning “artillery primer” (REDHOUSE 1988:379), i. e. “Lunte, Reibzündschraube” in his own source, HEUSER-ŞEVKET *Türkisch-deutsches Wörterbuch*.

²² Among a dozen Greek dictionaries be they etymological, historical, descriptive or bilingual, it is only in one of them, ΤΕΓΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ/ΦΥΤΡΑΚΗΣ, *Ελληνικό λεξικό*, Αθήνα 1993, that the Gk. *χωνί* is attested in the meaning “cavity in the ground”. Therefore we cannot consider the SCr. geographic appellation a loan from Greek, but a local SCr. development.

²³ Similar examples of geographic appellatives’ nomination after vessels are numerous, cf. SCr. *čabar, kazan, kotlina*, all with a secondary meaning “valley, ravine” (SCHÜTZ 1957:39), or the international word *crater* “volcano pit” < Gk. *κράτηρ* “mixing bowl”.

Unlike Turkish, Rumanian or even Albanian loan-words, Grecisms in contemporary Serbo-Croatian do not belong to any specific terminology (save that of religion). They are present in various sections of life sporadically, individually and not within groups which would thus foster the preservation of their original semantics. This has created favourable conditions for free semantic evolution, as seen in our heterogeneous corpus.

All the words on our list in their PSA are Balkanisms, but this is not the case with their SSA. Their secondary meanings are not paralleled in other Balkan languages but in certain synonymous domestic terms, in certain universal semantic shifts, or sometimes they are quite new metaphors, metonymies or derogations individually present in SCr.

Having this in mind, we propose a distinction to be made between lexical Balkanisms and semantic Balkanisms, since not all the formal lexical Balkanisms are necessarily Balkanisms in all of their semantic realizations.

In our opinion, the semantic analysis of loan-words could adopt the division into PSA and SSA, thus giving a solid basis for differentiating between lexical Balkanisms and those that do not fall in that category, in other words, individual evolutions peculiar to a single language. Classification of entire corpora of lexical Balkanisms originating from the same language into sets of: a) primarily and, b) secondarily semantically adapted ones would make it possible to arrive at comprehensive corpora of Balkanic Grecisms, Turkisms, Rumanianisms, etc., by means of accumulation of corpora of PSA loan-words from each of the giving languages. The corpora of Balkanic SSAs, on the other hand, could be precious material for the theory of languages in contact and for the semantic theory in general.

This project might be one of the many tasks awaiting Balkan linguistics in future.

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