

Is there/will there be a “Bosnian” language?
Aspects of the Language Question in Post-War Bosnia
By Geoff Husic

One may be hard pressed to select a topic that is likely to provoke more emotional responses among the people of the Balkans than language, the obvious contender, of course, being religion. The reason for such ardent reactions to language and religion is that they are at the core of the identity of the majority of the people of the Balkans and are the characteristics that accentuate the differences between a specific group and their varied but often closely related neighbors. In other words it is these two characteristics which to a great degree determine the “ethnicity” of the various Balkan peoples, or more specifically for the purposes of this paper, the Serbo-Croatian (SC) speaking nationalities of Bosnia¹, namely the Muslims, Serbs, and Croats². It is axiomatic that the importance of language is rarely limited to purely linguistic concerns. Far from being only a means of communication, language often reflects social, cultural, and political realities. This has certainly been the case in the past and continues to be the case in the present in the former Yugoslavia. In this paper I will examine how language issues have been intimately intertwined with the issues of ethnicity and nationalism in the SC speaking lands of former Yugoslavia in general and in Bosnia specifically, and how these issues are playing out after the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Historical Background

Before we can delve into the intricacies of the Yugoslav and Bosnian language issues, we must first review some of the history of the region in question, the Balkan Peninsula, and the

¹It is customary for Bosnians to refer to Bosnia and Hercegovina collectively as Bosnia.

²In this paper I will seem to vary the nouns Croat/Croatian and Serb/Serbian. When using Croat or Serb I will be referring to the ethnic group regardless of where they may reside. The terms Croatian and Serbian will refer to Croats from Croatia and Serbs from Serbia, respectively.

peoples involved, the South Slavs³. The Balkan Peninsula has truly been an ethnic crossroads since before recorded history. The ethnic history of the Balkans is in fact so complicated, that it is almost impossible to discuss the ethnicity of any nominal ethnic group in a meaningful way other than in cultural, religious, or linguistic terms. Any claim of “racially pure ancestry” by any group must be seemed as wholly fallacious and can serve little except nationalist, or at its worst, fascistic goals. Bosnia in itself represents a special microcosm of this ethnic complexity, rivaled perhaps only by Macedonia. The modern Bosnian population is said to have originated from Slavic incursions from north of the Danube, whereby large areas of the Balkans were settled in the 6th and 7th centuries, displacing or absorbing the indigenous Illyrians, another Indo-European-speaking people from whom the Albanians descend, and certain mixed Illyrian and Celtic tribes (Scordisci). However, it is impossible to determine the exact relationship between the Slav settlers and the indigenous populations.⁴ Unlike many previous invaders, the Slavic society was agrarian, and the Slavs settled and tilled the lands in the areas they acquired.

The modern Slavic languages are normally divided into three major groups: East Slavic (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian), West Slavic (Polish, Czech, Slovak, Sorbian, Lusatian) and South Slavic (Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Bulgarian). There is a great deal of common vocabulary shared by all Slavic languages, making them often mutually intelligible, and the grammars of the Slavic languages, except for Macedonian and Bulgarian⁵, are quite similar. Slovenian, spoken in Slovenia and by minority populations in Austria and Italy, is superficially very similar to SC but is not generally understood by SC speakers in its spoken form. Macedonian, although it has lost all of the complicated inflectional noun system found in all other Slavic languages except Bulgarian, still enjoys a great deal of mutual comprehensibility

³Some historians prefer not to consider Slovenia and Croatia as Balkan nations. In this paper they will be considered so for the sake of brevity.

⁴Barbara Jelavich. History of the Balkans. London: Cambridge University Press, 1983, Vol. 1, pg. 15.

⁵The major differences between Macedonian and Bulgarian on the one hand and other Slavic languages are: the loss of all noun inflections, the presence of a definite (postpositional as in Albanian and Romanian), and an extraordinarily complex verbal system.

with SC. If we disregard for a moment the standard written forms of the Slavic languages of the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria it can be clearly seen from dialect studies that the idea of strictly defined languages is misleading. The South Slavic languages clearly constitute one dialect continuum that extends from the Carinthian Alps to the Black Sea. In former Yugoslav territory, if one begins in northern Slovenia and ends in southern Macedonia, traveling from village and village and town to town, it is evident that each local dialect blends gradually and imperceptibly into the next. Each local dialect will share more features (e.g. phonetic, lexical, or syntactic) in common with closely neighboring dialects than with those further away. In this way Slovenian dialects blend into Croatian dialects as one approaches the Kupa River dividing Slovenia and Croatia. An inevitable result is that the classification of dialects as being from one or another language is often highly subjective. For example, the Slovenian vs. Croatian status of some border dialects in this area has been in dispute for years. In the transition areas between Serbian and Macedonian an interesting form has developed which is in many ways closer to Serbian but has much simplified case structure (three cases, vs. six in Serbian, and none in Macedonian). This group of dialects has become known as Torlak, and there is still much argument as to whether these are “Serbian dialects” or “Macedonian dialects.” For the most part linguists, especially those outside the former Yugoslavia, are sanguine to accept the question of languages vs. dialect as unanswerable, and agree that the arguments involved are generally more political than scientific in nature.

It is generally believed that other than the term “Slav” itself, there were no ethnic designations in the modern, nationalist sense among the Slavs of the Balkans in their early history, although tribal designations surely existed. Indeed the names Serb and Croat, although their exact origins are in dispute, appear to have been such tribal designations, and they did not begin to acquire their fully politically and religiously-inspired ethnic significance until the 19th century. By this time rather than reflecting any definable ethnic origin, the designations Serb and Croat had become coterminous with Orthodox and Catholic, respectively. Even into the 20th century it was not uncommon for the peoples of Yugoslavia to identify themselves only by locale or region, e.g. Slovenes in Bela Krajina called themselves **krajnci**, Croats of the Zagorje region near Zagreb identified themselves as **Zagorci**, and many Croats along the Dalmatian coast called

themselves only **Dalmatinci**, etc., thus demonstrating a tenuous connection with the broader ethnic labels. Nevertheless, we can begin with a few assumptions and generalizations. If we discount some of the smaller ethnic minorities of Bosnia, principally the Romanians, Germans, Vlachs⁶, the main ethnic groups inhabiting Bosnia, i.e. the Muslims⁷ (43% of the population based on pre-war numbers⁸), Serbs (31.2%), and Croats (17.4%) accept the broader self-designation of “Slav.” Although in their national consciousness, it is traditional for Slavic peoples to express the sentiment that there is some kind of absolute ethnic and cultural foundation for this designation, from the historical perspective, the only reliable statement that can be made, especially with regard to Balkan Slavs, is that the Slavs are peoples whose native language is a Slavic tongue, i.e. one of a number of closely related languages that diverged from an ancestral language, usually referred to as Common Slavic, sometime in the 6th century CE. Interestingly, the modern self-designation of at least three Slavic groups, the Croats, Serbs, and the Bulgarians, are believed to be of a non-Slavic origin. The name **Croat** (Hrvat) is widely accepted as being Sarmatian (an Iranian tribe) in origin, and was first attested in a Greek tombstone in southern Russia from the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE in the remarkably similar form *Choroatos*.⁹ The name **Serb** (Srbin) is likely also related, and indeed Ptolemy mentions a Sarmatian tribe called the **Serboi** north of the Caucasus¹⁰. The exact relationship between the Sarmatians and the Slavs is not known, but clearly the first “Croats” were either Slavic tribes with Iranian rulers, or Iranian or mixed tribes that were eventually assimilated by Slavs. The name **Bulgarin** (Bŭlgarin), of course, was acquired directly from the Turkic Bulgar tribes, which

⁶Traditional nomadic sheep herders speaking a language akin to Romanian.

⁷Since the 1963 Bosnian Constitution the Muslim population enjoyed the status of *narodnost*, or “nationality”, conferring certain cultural and political advantages, and nominally putting them on equal footing with Serbs and Croats.

⁸Stanovištvo Bosne i Hercegovina., pg. 9.

⁹Petar Skok. Etimologijski rječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskoga jezika. Zagreb: YAZU, 1971, Vol. 1, pg. 691.

¹⁰Ibid, vol. 3, pg. 316.

conquered Slavic territories in the 7th century but in time became culturally and linguistically assimilated by the much more numerous Slavs. It is very likely that all the Slavic peoples of the Balkans have a certain amount of “non-Slavic blood.” However, whether this blood is Germanic, Celtic, Turkish, Sarmatian, Illyrian, or that of some long-lost ethnic group is irrelevant, for all these now consider themselves Slavic-- ethnically, culturally, and linguistically. However more “exotic” heritages constructed for the South Slavs would be, as we will see later, at times exploited for specific nationalist purposes.

Although it is quite apparent that the underlying ethnic substratum of the South Slavs in general, and the Slavs of Bosnia in particular, represents a great diversity of physical types, this notion of a common Slavic heritage has, for the most part, been accepted as a given in the South Slavic lands and Bosnia. An outgrowth of this sentiment can be seen in the Illyrian Movement (1835-1848), later called the “Yugoslav” or “South Slav” Movement, represented by a group which advocated a South Slavic union and espoused the belief that all South Slavs were descended from the illustrious Illyrians. Nevertheless, there have during the history of the South Slavic lands also been attempts by demagogues of various nationalities to characterize members of other ethnic groups as less than “pure”, as occurred in the Croatian (Ustaša) fascist state of WWII, which mimicked Nazi policies and conducted its own genocidal campaigns against non-Croats, principally Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies. Not surprisingly, the probable Iranian origin of the name Croat was exploited by Croatian fascists to argue for their “Aryan” and therefore superior lineage, since in the Nazi racial hierarchy the ancient Iranians ranked higher than many other races. Similar attempts in the 19th and 20th centuries were also made on both Croat and Serb sides to diminish the importance of their opposing nationality by declaring them nonexistent. For example in the 1860's the Croatian nationalist Ante Starčević declared that all Serbs are really Croats (as are also the Slovenes and Macedonians) with the statement: “the entire population between Macedonia and Germany ... has only one nationality, one homeland, one Croatia being.” His Serbian counterpart, Nikola Stojanović, similarly declared in an article that the Croats are really Serbs, but with the additional inflammatory statement that the Serbs and Croats would

continue to be in conflict until “either we [Serbs] or you [Croats] are eliminated.”¹¹ These colorful examples of national and ethnocentric rhetoric are woefully representative of much of the SC language debate at the end of the 19th century, and, as we will see, of renewed debate after the collapse of Yugoslavia.

It is not my intent in this paper to take a stance as to whether the forms of the Slavic language spoken in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Montenegro are one language or several. The only thing that matters for our purposes is that some consider them one language with several variants, while others consider them distinct, and that one or the other perception has changed over the course of time and that in most cases these perceptions have been based on factors other than linguistic ones. I would like to mention a personal observation from my travels in Yugoslavia and with “Yugoslavs” in the US with regard to the language question. The nationalities in question have devised a simple but clever way of avoiding the specific issue, either due to their own confusion or for the sake of the “political correctness” of the time¹². This is the following: rather than mentioning the name of their language, more often than not they would simply say “naš jezik” or “our language.” My personal supposition is that this usage harkens back to previous times when there was not a clear sense of what exactly constituted Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, Muslim, Montenegrin, or Macedonian ethnicity and it was not always clear to the speaker what his language should be called, especially when his name for the language might be very different from that used by an outsider.

In this paper, for the sake of brevity, I will normally refer to the language as Serbo-Croatian unless I am referring specifically to the Croatian or Serbian standards. In some cases it is expedient to refer to the Western (for the most part Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina) and Eastern (mostly Serbia and Montenegro) variants when discussing linguistic factors while intentionally setting aside the national question. For example, when referring to a particular

¹¹ Nikola Stojanović [under initials N.S.]. “Srbi i hrvati” in Srpski književni glasnik., knj. 6, br, 6 (1902), pg. 1158. Exact quote: “do istrage naše ili vaše.”

¹²To use the term Serbo-Croatian during Communist times would be the most politically acceptable, but many people were uncomfortable with the term; to use the terms Croatian or Serbian could be considered inflammatory in certain contexts.

linguistic feature among Bosnian Muslims it is less problematic to refer to it as an Eastern or Western feature than a Serbian or Croatian feature.

The standard Croatian and Serbian languages as they exist today were codified in the second half of the 19th century when intellectuals in both Croatia and Serbia desired to give their languages an elevated political and cultural status. At this time Serbia had newly gained independence from the Ottoman Empire, and Croatia was governed by the Austro-Hungarians. The two most important individuals involved in this process were Vuk Karadžić, a Serb, and Ljudevit Gaj, a Croat. Both had nationalistic as well as linguistic motives in mind when they made their proposals. Although they both came to more or less same conclusions concerning the most appropriate standard for both the Croats and Serbs, the initial ostensible assumptions upon which this proposal was made were very different. Karadžić contended that speakers of **ije štokavian** (this will be discussed in much greater detail below), the most common Serbian dialect, were Serbs, regardless of what they called themselves¹³, the obvious conclusion being that any lands (including Dalmatia, Istria, Croatia, Slavonia, Vojvodina, and Bosnia and Hercegovina) where this “Serbian” was spoken were by definition also “Serbian lands.” His argument for such a stance was based on the prevailing European notion of the day that nationhood was based on shared language, while other factors such as religion were secondary. If Catholic and Protestant Germans consider themselves one people why not the South Slavs, he asked.¹⁴ Such a stance, which was in tune with Serb public opinion, was to have the predictable effect of encouraging the dream of Serb nationalists for a Greater Serbia in which all of Karadžić’s “Serbs” would be united. Gaj, a leader of the Illyrian movement, seems to have had motives rather different from those of Karadžić. Since a sizeable number of Croats, most importantly those inhabiting much of Dalmatia and the Zagreb region itself, were not speakers of the **ije štokavian** dialect, he believed a linguistic unification of the Croatia lands would better allow Croatia to counter cultural Germanization and Magyarization. In accordance with this lofty

¹³Charles Jelavich. South Slav Nationalisms. Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1990, pg. 7.

¹⁴[Vuk Karadžić. “Serbs all and everywhere”, 1849 ??? where?]

Illyrianism, Gaj envisioned not only a linguistic but also a political union of coequal Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

In 1850 a resolution called the Vienna Literary Agreement (Bečki književni dogovor) was endorsed by many prominent Serb and Croat scholars including Karadžić. This agreement advocated the same **ije štokavian** dialect as the standard for both Croats and Serbs due to the fact that it was the most widespread, was the language used in much of the great Dubrovnik literature, because it was the language of most epic and folk literature, and most simply because it had become the form that most contemporary Serb and Croat writers were already using. In order to place this resolution in the proper political context it is useful to note that in modern SC dialect studies this dialect is referred to as a **štokavian ijekavian** dialect of Hercegovina. To the participants of the Vienna Literary Agreement it was uniformly perceived as being a Serb dialect.¹⁵

The Agreement was officially sanctioned by the Serbian government in 1868. It was not sanctioned by the Croatian Sabor until 1892, and by that time the Serbs had come to prefer their eastern **ekavian** variant.¹⁶ From the Serbian point of view there were several benefits to choosing this variant. Most importantly, however, this variant was the prestige dialect of the capital, Belgrade, and, being **ekavian**, it allowed for a closer linguistic identification with Macedonia, on which Serbia had had its eyes after the Austro-Hungarians had annexed Bosnia and Hercegovina 1878, effectively closing it off to Serbian interests.¹⁷ To be sure, there were also groups that opposed any kind of linguistic or political union of the South Slavs, for whatever reason, however, in the end, these groups had little effect on the final outcome of the accepted standards for Croatian and Serbian. Considering the ethnic antagonisms that were rife in this period, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that there was such a strong consensus in the language question. If

¹⁵Duncan Wilson. The Life and Times of Vuk Stafanović Karadžić 1787-1864. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, pg. 312.

¹⁶Charles Jelavich. South Slav Nationalisms. Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1990, pg. 11.

¹⁷Ivo Banac. The National Question in Yugoslavia. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984, pg. 210.

we imagine for a moment that nationalist sentiments had completely prevailed in the language question in this period, it is quite plausible that the Eastern Zagreb (**kajkavian**) dialect could have won out as the Croatian standard. If this had indeed occurred, due to the relatively great differences between this dialect and the Eastern (Serbian) variant, there would today be much more validity to the argument that Croatian and Serbian standards are separate languages. This, in fact, did not happen, and the Zagreb dialect has never enjoyed official status, although there have been a number of important literary works in the Zagreb **kajkavian** dialect.

Croatian and Serbian were only first officially declared “one language with two variants” as a result of the politically inspired Novi Sad Agreement in 1957, when the Titoist ideology of Yugoslavism was at its peak. Although the agreement was ostensibly intended to unify the SC speaking peoples, it was to have long-lasting unintended repercussions. Many Serbs were unhappy with the agreement in that they saw any concession to the Croatian variant as proof and encouragement of Croatian separatist aspirations. Many Croats likewise regarded the agreement with great mistrust, seeing it as a pretext for further linguistic, political, and cultural Serbianization. This Croatian dissent was able to manifest itself publically only in 1971, when the Novi Sad Agreement was denounced by Matica Hrvatska, the main Croatian cultural institution. The agreement was likewise denounced by many Muslim intellectuals in Bosnia who also saw in it the danger of greater Serbianization. Similar objections were raised by Montenegrins, only some of which consider themselves Serbs, while others consider Montenegrin to be a distinct ethnicity.¹⁸

The Serbo-Croatian Dialects

I will avoid going into too much unnecessary detail concerning the extensive topic of SC dialectology, however it will be useful to discuss in brief the manner that SC dialects are classified. There has traditionally been a two-tiered approach based on the word used for ‘what’

¹⁸Ante Cuvalo. The Croatian National Movement, 1966-1972. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, pg. 113.

and the modern reflex of the Common Slavic vowel called the **jat**¹⁹. Of the three words for ‘what,’ i.e. **što**, **ča**, and **kaj**, the last two only occur in what are considered to be true Croatian (i.e. spoken only by Croats in Croatia) dialects (**kaj** in the Zagreb region and NE Croatia) and **ča** in much of Dalmatia excluding the Dubrovnik area, which is **štokavian**). The **što** variant is spoken by the majority of other Croats, and all ethnic groups in Bosnia, Serbs, and Montenegrins. The other test is the **jat**. Assumed to have been pronounced in Old Slavic something like the **a** in ‘cat’ it has evolved differently in the SC dialects, becoming either **-i-** (in Dalmatia, and small parts of Hercegovina), **-(i)je** in most of Croatia, Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Montenegro, and parts of Dalmatia (most importantly Dubrovnik), or **-e-** (in most of Serbia proper), e.g. the word for ‘milk’ was in Old Slavic **mlъko**, and in the modern SC dialects exists as **mljeko**, **mlijeko**, **mliko**, or **mleko**. Dialects are then named based on a combination of these features, hence the unwieldy terms such as **ije(kavian) štokavian**, **ekavian štokavian**, **ikavian čakavian**, etc. The Vienna Agreement, as noted above, advocated the **ije(kavian) štokavian** dialect, although the Serbs later opted for their own **ekavian štokavian** variant. Despite this change, the Serbian and Croatian variants were similar in almost all other respects except for a few minor differences that might seem ludicrously insignificant to speakers of languages in which dialect variation is vastly greater. I will mention the salient differences which will be important for later discussion:

Phonological: (1) the **jat** development to **(i)je** or **e** as above; (2) the development of the Common Slavic clusters **skj-** and **stj-** which became **ć** in the Croatian (Western) and **št** in Serbian (Eastern) variants, so that we have pairs such as **općina** (Western) and **opština** (Eastern) meaning ‘district’; (3) Many Western words have an **h** where the Eastern has **v**, e.g. Western **uho** ‘ear’ vs Eastern **uvo**; (4) some slight variations in stress and intonation patterns.²⁰

¹⁹Appearing as **Ѣ** in old Slavic texts.

²⁰Serbo-Croatian is very conservative in the respect that, unlike any other Slavic language, it has preserved a tonal system assumed to have existed in Common Slavic. Each stressed syllable carries one of four tones (actually pitches): short falling, short rising, long falling, and long rising. Tone is normally only indicated in writing in cases of ambiguity.

Syntactic: The Western variant prefers the infinitive in many constructions such as: **Volim raditi** ‘I enjoy working’ whereas in the Eastern variant the conjunction **da** ‘that’ and a finite verb is preferable, e.g. **Volim da radim** ‘*I like that I work.’²¹

Morphological: The Western variant normally employs the verbal suffix **-irati** to create verbs based on non-Slavic roots, e.g. **organizirati** ‘to organize’; the Eastern variant employs the suffix **-isati** for the same purpose.

Lexical: There is a very large and well-defined core of vocabulary (approximately 5% of total vocabulary²²) in which one of two doublets is preferred in written and spoken Serbian and Croatian, e.g. ‘air’ is **vazduh** in Serbian and **zrak** in Croatian. Some of these doublets appear identical in Croatian and Serbian but differ somewhat in meaning, e.g. **čas** (‘hour’ in Serbian but ‘moment’ in Croatian). It is indeed to this vocabulary difference that SC speakers usually point when asked about the differences between Serbian and Croatian.

Most of these differences are well known to all speakers of SC, and it would be rare for any of them to cause misunderstanding in themselves²³.

In addition, I must mention a linguistically superficial but visually dramatic difference in the everyday use of the Serbian and Croatian variants which concerns the alphabet and which substantially complicates the SC language question in practical terms. Alphabet choice has been a powerful symbol of cultural, religious, and political allegiance in Yugoslavia. All Croats use the Latin alphabet, whereas as most Serbs write in the Cyrillic alphabet, although most Serbs can

²¹The Eastern preference for the **da** construction is connected with the gradual loss of the infinitive as one proceeds east, concluding with its complete absence in Macedonian and Bulgarian.

²²Rasio Dunatov. “A Note on the Nature and the Status of the Standard Serb-Croatian in Bosnia-Herzegovina” in *Slovene Studies*, vol. 9, no. 102 (1987), pg. 76.

²³Education, universal military service for all men, and the preponderance of Serbian forms in the media assured that all SC speakers would have ample exposure to variant vocabulary.

also read the Latin script with little difficulty. Until the Yugoslav War most works written in the Serbian variant were published in both Cyrillic and Latin scripts for the benefit of non-Cyrillic readers. In Sarajevo the daily newspaper Oslobođenje was, before the war, printed the Latin and Cyrillic scripts on alternate pages, however now employs the Latin script exclusively. The complication occurs in Serbs (especially Croatian Serbs, Bosnian Serbs, and Montenegrins), most of whom are **ijekavian** speakers. Most Bosnian Serbs and Montenegrins write in Cyrillic, however there is no accepted Cyrillic **ijekavian** standard, and consequently Serbs who speak **ijekavian** as their native variant must by necessity write in **ekavian** if they choose to write in Cyrillic and wish to have their writing accepted as standard. Many Serbs are also “biscrptal,” and will have to write in two variants, depending on the script used at any one time. The use of two alphabets in Bosnia has lead to problems in the educational system and has been a frequent topic in pedagogical literature.²⁴

There are three additional scripts that have been used in the South Slavic lands and Bosnia in particular. Much of the Slavic Roman Catholic liturgical literature was written in the **Glagolitic** script, which paradoxically predates Cyrillic although it is the script which is in actuality attributed to Saint Cyril. Glagolitic is still in use for religious purposes by some Dalmatian and Montenegrin communities.²⁵ A variant of the Cyrillic alphabet called **Bosančica** was used in Bosnia and Dalmatia but was eventually replaced with either the Latin script or the modern Cyrillic as we know it today.

The final important script, in use primarily in Bosnia, was the Arabic script. Besides the many works written by Bosnian Muslims in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, the period from the 15th century to the end of the 19th century generated in addition a large body of Muslim literature and religious works written in SC employing a modified form of the Arabic script called

²⁴Mostarsko savjetovanje o književnom jeziku. Sarajevo: Institut za jezik i književnost, 1974.

²⁵V.A. Istrin. 1100 let slavianskoi azbuki. Moskva: Nauka, 1988.

Arebica.²⁶ The Arabic script was also used by many literate Muslims for their private communications and several periodicals were published in **Arebica** in the second half of the 19th century, e.g. Muallim, Tarik, and the almanac Mekteb.²⁷ This literary phenomenon is called in **alhamijado**²⁸, a term borrowed from the Spanish **aljamiado**, which is similarly used to denote works written in Spanish using the Arabic script during the Moorish period. Although in recent years there has been a renewed interest in gaining some familiarity with the Arabic script, evidenced by tutorials in some cultural magazines and possibly due to a recently awakened interest in the Qur'an among Bosnian youth, I have seen no serious proposals to reintroduce **Arebica** as a script for everyday use by Muslims in Bosnia.

The Language Situation in Bosnia Today

As we have seen, most linguistic discussion in the 19th and early 20th century dealt with the definition of the Croatian and Serbian languages or a common Serbo-Croatian language. The goal of these efforts, depending on the philosophical or political camp, was to either identify the South Slavic people (most importantly the Croats and Serbs) as one people, or, conversely, to characterize them as distinct, even, in extreme cases, as unrelated. However, SC is not spoken in only Croatia and Serbia. There are another 2.5 million SC speakers in Bosnia and Hercegovina and over 40% of these people consider themselves neither Croats nor Serbs, but rather Slavic

²⁶Abdurahman Nametak. Hrestomatija bosanske alhamijado književnosti. Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1981.

²⁷Muhamed Huković. Alhamijado književnost i njeni stvaraoci. Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1986, pg. 20.

²⁸The majority of these unique works, mostly in manuscript form, were destroyed when the Serbian military shelled the National and University Library in Sarajevo in 1992.

Muslims or **Bošnjaks**²⁹. It can be readily seen that there is a serious problem with the use of the designation for SC in respect to the form of the language as spoken in Bosnia. Even if the term “Serbo-Croatian” has fallen out of favor with most speakers in the 1990's, it still retains some linguistic validity if the user's intent is to refer to it as one language with several variants. In the case of Bosnia, however, to call the language Serbo-Croatian would be exclusionary indeed as it would ignore the sizeable Muslim population. Furthermore, a circumlocution such as the “Serbo-Croato-Muslim language” would be ludicrous. Clearly, the only resort for Bošnjaks seems to be to use the term “Bosnian language.” There are of course, important political motives for doing so. If we accept that nationhood is often closely associated with language, there is a clear motivation for Bošnjaks to have a language they can call their own. Since the 18th century Croats and Serbs have each been claiming the Muslims as their own (i.e Muslim Croats or Muslim Serbs, terms rarely used by Muslims themselves), often based on linguistic justifications. If we remember that the terms Serb and Croat only acquired their modern significance after the period of Islamization in Bosnia, coming to mean Orthodox and Catholic, respectively, a Serb or Croat claim on the Bosnian Muslims is nonsensical. However linguistic means have offered the only possible approach to these spurious claims.

It is not an uncommon linguistic occurrence in European history that a subordinate regional dialect has gained an official status alongside or even supplanted another prestige dialect, e.g. Catalan in Spain. Similarly, it would be natural for intellectuals in Bosnia to desire to create an environment whereby the Bosnian form of SC is accepted as its own “Bosnian language” rather than be seen as merely a SC variant. But how can such a language be defined in a multi-ethnic country with large numbers of Serbs and Croats as well as Muslim?

If we backtrack for a moment, we will see that declaring the SC spoken today in Bosnia as a “Bosnian language” is rather curious from a linguistic perspective. We will remember that Vuk Karadžić was the first important linguist to begin work on standardizing SC by writing the

²⁹The term **Bošnjak** for the modern **Bosanac**, i.e. ‘Bosnian’ goes back to the Middle Ages. Recently many Muslim intellectuals, including the president, Alija Izetbegović, have proposed that this traditional designation replace the term “Muslimani” hoping to finally set aside the question of whether the Muslim are really “Serb Muslims” or “Croat Muslims” (cf. Tone Bringa. Being Muslim the Bosnian Way. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, pg. 35)

first scientific descriptive grammar (Pismenica serbskoga jezika, 1814) and compiling the first comprehensive dictionary (Srpski rječnik, 1818). Before the modern standard gained currency official Serbian documents and literature were normally written in a hybrid language of Serbian, Church Slavonic, and Russian, quite different from actual speech. Karadžić, who was also a collector of folk and epic poetry, and a great admirer of them, was clearly interested in creating a standard much closer to the common speech of the people. Ironically, however, the variant that Karadžić had chosen as the most ideal was not a dialect of one of the great South Slavic centers such as Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Novi Sad, or Belgrade, but he rather chose the dialect spoken in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Hence the speech of Bosnia and Hercegovina, being geographically the most central of SC dialects and the basis of the SC standards, is in many respects already “more Serbo-Croatian” than many dialects of either Croatian or Serbian themselves. This is the conundrum with which the rest of this paper will deal.

So, what then are some of the distinctive feature of the speech variants in Bosnia and how are these differences to be viewed in the greater SC-speaking context?:

Phonological: Bosnia and Hercegovina are almost exclusively **ije štokavian** areas. This dialect is spoken by all speakers regardless of their ethnicity. Greenberg³⁰ has identified a set of phonological features distinctive to Western Hercegovina, some of which are shared by Muslims, Serbs, and Croats, and some of which are unique to one or two of the ethnic groups, but none of these features are standard. One notable phonological Bosnian feature is the appearance of the consonant **h** in words absent this consonant in common SC. In some cases the **h** is not historically justified, e.g. **mahrama** ‘kerchief; vs common SC **marama**. I have noticed this for the first time in print in an article in the journal Behar, in the example **lahko** ‘easy’ vs the standard **lako**.

The SC variant of Bosnia has preserved well the prosodic features of pitch (rising and falling)

³⁰Robert D. Greenberg. “The Politics of Dialects Among Serbs, Croats, and Muslims in the Former Yugoslavia” in East European Politics and Societies (Vol. 10, no. 3, Fall 1996, pg. 411)

and vowel length (short and long) that it inherited from common Slavic. Although these features, have been to a great degree lost in the speech of Croatia and Serbia, especially in the capitals, Zagreb and Belgrade, they are nevertheless considered be important standard features and their correct usage is pointed out in both Croatian and Serbian normative dictionaries³¹.

Syntactic: Although I have not yet found any statistical studies as to the relative frequency of these two syntactic variants in Bosnia, my personal observation among Muslim and Bosnian Serbs³² is that there is a general preference for the form using the conjunction **da**, although when questioned on this point most Bosnians I have interviewed claim to view both as equally acceptable.

Morphological: With regard to the verb suffix **-irati/-isati** the usage in Bosnia is not consistent. Some words are used exclusively in the **-irati** form, e.g. **analizirati** ‘to analyze,’ while other will use the **-isati** form, e.g. **informisati**. ‘to inform.’

Lexical: Dunatov reports that approximately a quarter of the doublets exist as free variants, but that overall Eastern forms are about twice as common as Western ones.³³ My personal observations put the number of Eastern doublet forms somewhat higher than that, at least in speech from recent immigrants from Sarajevo and Mostar, and I believe that Dunatov has overestimated the number of free variants.

Turkisms (Turkish loan words in SC³⁴) constitute a particular lexical category which is

³¹E.g. Vladimir Anić’s Rječnik hrvatskoga jezika. Zagreb: Novi Liber, 1991.

³²I have not been able to recently observe any Bosnian Croatians, but my Bosnian acquaintances report that there is no difference in usage among the Bosnian ethnic groups.

³³Rasio Dunatov. “A Note on the Nature and the Status of the Standard Serb-Croatian in Bosnia-Herzegovina” in Slovene Studies, vol. 9, no. 102 (1987), pg. 76.

³⁴The term ‘Turkism’ generally also includes Arabic and Persian words and expressions, even though they are not Turkic, because they were acquired via Turkish and the Ottoman culture.

fundamental to the discussion of the SC variant spoken in Bosnia. I will treat them in some detail here.

For the purposes of this discussion I will divide Turkish loan words into three main groups:

(1) Older borrowings that have become everyday speech in almost all variants of SC, and are so ingrained and have existed for such a long time that they are not normally perceived by the average speaker as being Turkisms, e.g. **sât** ‘hour’ from Turkish **saat**³⁵. This can be compared to, let us say, **jihad** in English, which is clearly marked as a foreign word from Arabic, whereas **cotton** from Arabic **quṭun** is not. Since these words are not perceived as Turkisms they are not relevant to the discussion.

(2) Specific theological terminology connected with Islam, and Muslim rituals and holidays. As such these Turkisms have little relevance to the discussion, as this is a common phenomenon in any religiously diverse milieu.

(3) Everyday Turkish words used mainly by Muslims in SC speaking areas with substantial Muslim populations. These words have traditionally not been accepted as standard SC vocabulary and they usually have a Slavic SC or separate Serb or Croatian variant that will generally be used in exclusion to the Turkish word by non-Muslims living in the same area. I have devised the following test: if the word does not appear in Morton Benson’s SerboCroatian-English Dictionary, an excellent but conservative, Serbian-oriented dictionary, then I have assumed it to belong to this category. If the word indeed appears there will generally belong to one of the first two categories, i.e.. ingrained or theological in nature.

It is this last group which is pertinent to the discussion of the treatment of Turkisms. For thoroughness I will mention that this group can also be divided into several sub-groups, but for the sake of this discussion I will limit them to two:

³⁵Which, of course is also an Arabic loan into Turkish, but in the linguistic discussion of loan words it is only the most recently intermediary language which is significant.

(A) The first subgroup consists of those Turkisms which were widely used in the period coinciding with Ottoman rule in the SC-speaking area of the Balkans, namely Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Hercegovina. With the increased interest by many intellectuals at the end of the 19th century in forging a standardized Croatian or Serbian or Serbo-Croatian, many Turkisms, especially those closely connected with the departing Ottoman presence, begin to disappear, certainly in written SC, and in speech as well. As SC became more standardized in newspapers, popular journals, and the educational system in the 19th century, it was naturally the city dwellers, especially educated city dwellers, who were to become most accustomed to this standard language in which many Turkisms had been lost..

(B) The second subgroup consists of those Turkisms as defined in the group 2 above which are still in current usage in Bosnia and Hercegovina. These words maybe fall anywhere in the stylistic spectrum from standard to colloquial, but are nevertheless in frequent use. Their use does not always correspond to the religion/ethnicity of the speaker, although they are more common among the Muslim population, and non-standard words will appear with great frequency among the lesser educated. For example, the Turkish loan **pirinač** “rice” is normally used only by Serbs in some areas whereas both Croats and Muslims will generally use **riža**. We can conclude from this phenomenon that the use of this category of Turkisms may often depend more on geography and overlapping isoglosses than ethnicity. It is interesting to compare this phenomenon with the choice of Serbian or Croatian terms in those cases where Serbs and Croats generally use a separate Slavic word.

When making any such generalizations about the use of Turkisms in Bosnia one must also consider that there will necessarily be a substantial difference in language usage among city dwellers as opposed to the rural populations. In some respects in this case language and ethnicity do go hand in hand, and this will be much more obvious in the rural environment. In large cities such as Sarajevo and Mostar there is much more likely to be more uniformity of speech across ethnic groups than in the country. This is especially evident in the Serb population of Bosnia and Hercegovina, a large number of which have traditionally been rural. The speech of Sarajevo Serbs is often indistinguishable from that of the Muslims or Croats, both lexically and

phonetically, unless the speaker intentionally uses a specific marked form (affecting the **ekavian** for when the natural variant for all ethnic groups in most of Bosnia and Hercegovina is **ijekavian**) to make his ethnicity known. However rural Serbs are much less likely to use many of the Turkisms that had become common to all city-dwelling ethnic groups, due to the simple fact that rural Muslim and Serb villages remained fairly homogenous and consequently rural Serbs were less exposed to the Turkism of common use in the cities.

In the last several years since the onset of war and the end of the war in Bosnia, I have also noticed a stylistic shift in the use of some of the common Turkisms used in Muslim periodicals. This would seem to indicate an attempt on the part of Muslims to reintroduce older Turkisms into the written language. The result is not always welcome or is even seen as ludicrous by some Muslims. One Bosnian acquaintance was dismayed at a new periodical entitled Dnevni avaz, i.e. Daily Voice. **Avaz** is ultimately a Persian word, meaning simply ‘voice,’ but that meaning would only be known to scholars of Persian. In modern Turkish it has undergone a semantic shift and means only ‘loud voice,’ the same meaning it has in Bosnia and is most commonly used in the Turkish adjectival form **avazli** meaning ‘loud mouth.’

The examination of a number of recent dictionaries from Bosnia is also instructive in this regard. One well-known dictionary by Abdulah Škaljić entitled Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom-hrvatskosrpskom jeziku [Turkisms in the Serbo-Croatian–Croato-Serbian Language] published in several editions in the 1970's and 1980's is a comprehensive, annotated dictionary of Turkish loan words, many of which were extracted from older Bosnian literature, and religious and historical works. My informal survey of Bosnian acquaintances assures me that a great number of these words are completely unknown to the average Bosnian Muslim, not to mention Bosnian Serbs or Croats, and many of them were probably never in common circulation among other than scholars, theologians, and writers. This is not surprising if we consider that most Bosnian scholars and writers from the period of Islamization onward spoke and wrote not only their native Slavic tongue, but were also versed in Arabic and Turkish, and in some cases Persian, whereas the common people knew only SC. Many of the literary writers in fact wrote the bulk of their works in these Eastern languages and it was therefore common for this learned terminology to find its way into their SC writings. Considering that fact that most of these words are indeed

not in common use it is revealing that recently new dictionaries containing mostly Turkisms have appeared with titles such as Alija Isakovic's Rječnik karakteristične leksike u bosanskome jeziku [Dictionary of Characteristic Vocabulary in the Bosnian Language], a somewhat exaggerated title if the intent is to describe Bosnian as it is spoken and written. It is therefore even more surprising that the next edition of this dictionary published two years later has undergone a title change and is now called: Rječnik bosanskoga jezika : karakeristična leksika [Dictionary of the Bosnian Language: characteristic vocabulary]. Although this is a very valuable tool in that it gives historical attestations of the appearance of each unique lexical term, it is really not a "Dictionary of the Bosnian Language" anymore than would be, let us say, a dictionary of English that contains only Norman French and Native American loan words, while ignoring the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary.

It is clear that in the current sociolinguistic atmosphere the use of Turkisms is associated primarily with the Muslims, and some Muslim intellectuals are interested in reviving as many as possible, but this exclusive association of Turkisms with the Muslims was not always the case. A Serb lexicographer, Đorđe Popović took a great interest in Turkisms at the end of the last century. Popović was one of the first scholars to compile a list of Turkish words in SC with the intent of including them in a Serbian dictionary (Veliki srpski rečnik) [The Great Serbian Dictionary]. A glance at the introduction to Popović's compilation of Turkisms shows that at least at the end of the 19th century, Turkisms were not necessarily viewed by Serbs as alien or Muslim elements in their speech. The author even cautions that since the collapse of Ottoman rule there is some danger that these words will be lost to the average speaker in Serbia. He fears that this loss would make it very difficult for Serbs to understand their folk and epic poetry, which contain many such Turkish words.³⁶ This is interesting to note, for one of the arguments in favor of a separate status for a "Bosnian language" lies in the assumption the variant of SC spoken in Bosnia is somehow distinctive because of the very presence and relative frequency of these Turkisms. This approach, of course, ignores the fact that many of these words were fully integrated in the SC speech in many other of the Ottoman-dominated areas and not just Bosnia

³⁶ Đorđe Popović, "Turske i druge istočanske reči u našem jeziku : građa za veliki srpski rečnik" in Glasnik srpskog učenog društva. Beograd: Društvo, knj. 59 (1884), pg. 6.

proper, and not just among the Muslim population.

It is evident that in the years since Bosnia's departure from Yugoslavia there has been a great deal of interest among some Muslims in incorporating more Islamic elements into the language, although such changes have been much less evident in major publications such as the daily Sarajevo newspaper Oslobođenje than in independent publications or specialized religious and cultural periodicals such as Behar.³⁷ Furthermore, this approach does not seem to be popular among secular-minded Bosnian Muslims I have interviewed on this question. They simply see no need to change the language in this manner and many fear that such a linguistic approach has the additional potential to antagonize Bosnian Serbs and Croats and to further encourage ethnic rivalry and mistrust. Nevertheless, in scanning the issues of Oslobođenje for the year 1995, I have observed an interesting phenomenon: A large number of non-standard Turkisms (of category 3) have begun to appear but with a very specialized function. Although these Turkisms rarely appear in the body of the newspapers text they are appearing quite frequently in headlines, I am postulating, as attention grabbers, e.g. (Turkism in italics) **Put kroz džehenem** [Journey through Hell] (standard SC is **pakao**); **Ljubitelji knjige, bujrum!** [Book lovers, welcome!] (standard SC is **izvolite!**); and even **Sevdah**³⁸ **na američki način** [Love American style] [standard SC is **ljubav**]

My assessment of the current state of the language with regard to the question of Turkisms is that they will continue to be used much in the way they have traditionally been used, i.e. as specialized vocabulary among the Muslims (learned and religious vocabulary, colloquialisms, slang, headline 'grabbers') but will not be actively encouraged for official or instructional purposes, and therefore should pose little danger in creating some kind of linguistic rift among Serb, Croat, and Muslims SC speakers in Bosnia.

So where then does this leave us in regard to our "Bosnian language" question? Above I

³⁷A journal published by the Muslim Revival Society in Zagreb, Croatia, but deals mainly with the topic of Bosnia.

³⁸This word does appear in Benson's dictionary but with the more specific meaning 'love sickness,' as it is used in some Serbian folk poetry, rather than the more general meaning of 'love.'

have discussed some of the salient features that distinguished the Bosnian variant from the Croatian and the Serbian standard variants. The overall complexity of the problem of placing the speech of Bosnia in the greater SC-speaking context can be seen in Dunatov's description of some of the approaches that have been taken whereby the Bosnian variant has variously been described as (1) a mixture or "hybrid" of the Eastern and Western variants, (2) the interpenetration of Eastern and Western variants³⁹, or (3) the neutralization of the differences between the Eastern and Western variants.⁴⁰ It is important to mention that Dunatov does not even include the possibility of the Bosnian variant as being classified as a separate language. Of course, Dunatov's study, written in 1987, is based on a synchronic approach, and does not take into consideration the political dimension that would come to the fore in an independent Bosnia.

My personal opinion is that none of these approaches are necessary, and that the variant spoken in Bosnia is simply a phenomenon of its geographical and dialectal location between the Western and Eastern variant continua. If we examine the use of the Eastern (Serbian) and Western (Croatian) doublets, we will see that in most cases one form is clearly preferred, and there are in most cases no objective linguistic criteria whereby one can predict which will be preferred except in those cases where the double concerns a consistent phonetic divergence, e.g. **v/h** above. It is quite uncommon for Bosnians to use one or the other word equally or randomly. This would seem to support the notion of linguistic economy⁴¹, whereby true synonyms are rare and tend to get weeded out of a language regularly. This would also seem to me to invalidate the idea of a hybrid or mixture, in which we would expect much more randomness and free variants in the case of doublets than indeed occurs. Furthermore, Ridjanović points out that in some cases where doubles appear to be equal, the individual words have acquired somewhat different

³⁹I don't quite understand this one. It seems like this would only make sense if these two variants were penetrating into a different language altogether or a substantially different dialect.

⁴⁰Rasio Dunatov. "A Note on the Nature and the Status of the Standard Serbo-Croatian in Bosnia-Herzegovina" in Slovene studies. (9/1-2, 1987) pg. 75.

⁴¹Midhat Ridjanović. "Languages in Contact and Linguistic Economy" in Language Contacts in Yugoslavia. Skopje: Assoc. for the Yugoslav Societies for Applied Linguistics, 1984, pg. 24. [summary in English; article in SC]

connotations, and hence are not true synonyms.⁴²

It is interesting to note in addition, that Bosnian linguistic policy, especially between 1970 and the war, was much more liberal than was probably necessary with regard to lexical choice. An important conference, entitled Symposium on Linguistic Tolerance in 1973⁴³, attended by leading linguists, politicians, and teachers, drafted a resolution calling for linguistic tolerance of SC variants in Bosnia and Hercegovina. The resolution states that the language will be called freely either Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian; Cyrillic and Latin will have equal status and schools must teach both; **ijekavian** will be the official variant and the form to be used exclusively in instruction, but otherwise individuals are free to use whichever variant they choose; and *individuals are free to use lexical items from either the Croatian or the Serbian variant*. It is the last point which is the most interesting, because it seems to not recognize that of the many lexical doublets that occur, there is in most cases one of the pairs that is clearly preferred in Bosnia. Nevertheless, the policy of tolerance was an official one, and from my personal experience I have observed that Bosnians seem to be, for the most part, much less dogmatic about the language issue than many Croats and Serbians.

There was obviously not a great deal of language planning going on in Sarajevo during the war, when everyday survival was foremost in the inhabitants' minds. Much of the infrastructure of Sarajevo's cultural institutions, including libraries, museums, archives, and mosques, was intentionally targeted and destroyed by Serbian artillery. Only in the last few years have we begun to see this process unfold in some of the bibliographic sources mentioned above.

Indeed, a large part of the process whereby the Bosnian variant may in time be accepted as a separate language or at least as a clearly defined variant may also be occurring outside of the borders of Bosnia itself. Since the breakup of Yugoslavia there have been strong political motives for linguistic modification in both Serbia and Croatia, although changes appeared, at least initially, to be more dramatic in Croatia. My friends in Zagreb report that initially after the

⁴²ibid.

⁴³Mostarsko savjetovanje o književnom jeziku. Sarajevo: Institut za jezik i književnost, 1974.

independence of Croatia there was much talk of radically reforming the language. However, with time, cooler heads have prevailed, and a more reasonable, measured approach has been taken. The present goal among Croatian language planners is to restore a certain core Croatian vocabulary that had fallen out of political favor during the Communist period and were systematically replaced with Serbian variants. This was generally either vocabulary formerly considered unacceptable⁴⁴, e.g. vocabulary that was seen by the Communist authorities as being associated with the NDH⁴⁵, or other Croatian vocabulary that had been supplanted because of the predominance of Serbian forms in the media, the military, and in scientific circles. There has been no serious discussion of replacing the current standard with a dialect, e.g. **kajkavian** or **čakavian** which could, with some justification, be argued as being “more Croatian.” These linguistic reforms can be the cause of great confusion for visiting emigres or other SC speakers who must pass through Croatia. In fact, several of my Bosnian refugee friends, residing temporarily in Croatia before emigrating to the US found themselves in some uncomfortable situations when their speech marked them as Bosnian (newly alien) and for not being aware of some of the new and resurrected vocabulary that had become current in Zagreb. In some cases locals would feign to not understand a particular word, one which had been replaced with a word from the new core vocabulary, even though this word had existed in good standing for at least 75 years heretofore. One friend found the situation so bizarre that he vowed to use only English on his next trip that took him through Croatia.

The Serbs for their part, have completely removed from their dictionaries any words perceived as being Croatian, words which until the breakup of Yugoslavia, frequently appeared alongside their Croatian counterparts in Serbian dictionaries. These words had been formerly included for political reasons. Due to the political dominance of the Serbian variant in all of the

⁴⁴Milorad Radovanović, ed. Srpski jezik na kraju veka. Beograd: Institut za srpski jezik SANU, 1996, pg. 183.

⁴⁵The fascist Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945). As in Germany where there were efforts to purge the language of foreign elements and to replace them with neologisms based on Germanic roots, NDH grammarians coined new words based on Slavic roots, e.g. **telefon** ‘telephone’ (from Greek ‘far sound’) was replaced with **dugozvon**, just as it had been replaced with **Fernsprecher** in Germany.

SC-speaking areas of the former Yugoslavia, there was never any temptation for Serbs to use this Croatian vocabulary, unlike in Croatia where repeated exposure to Serbian elements ensured their eventual penetration into the language, especially the language of the media.

Nevertheless, the relative moderateness of linguistic reform in both camps is somewhat surprising considering the otherwise vicious ethnic rivalries and the resulting bloodshed that were ultimately coaxed out by Milošević's regime. Scholars in the established learned institutions have, for the most part, not chosen to take up the linguistic saber against their fellow south Slavs. The most recent authoritative Croatian grammar, published in 1995 under the auspices of the *Zavod za Hrvatski Jezik*, an influential language-planning institute in Zagreb, is a good example. In the introductory historical overview to *Hrvatska gramatika* [Croatian Grammar] it is dispassionately explained that Croatian and Serbian form one diasystem, that is to say, a linguistic system forming a common denominator for a group of dialects, with several literary forms. This is clearly a far cry from a stance whereby Serbian and Croatian are viewed as different languages. This introduction could have easily been written in Communist times with little modification. The introduction then continues to quite rationally explain that the differences that do occur between Serbian and Croatian are a natural result of their divergent historical, cultural, religious, and political circumstances.

I have only been able to verify one analogous Serbian language source for this period following the Civil War, entitled *Srpski jezik na kraju veka* [The Serbian Language at the End of the Century], published by the Serbian Academy of Sciences in 1996. In the English summary of the historical background to this book the editor states that the languages of Belgrade and Zagreb have a "unified structure and unified substratum, Neoštokavian and Serbian,"⁴⁶ and that "by the end of the 20th century, in spite of the pronunciation differences of the language standard (Ekavian-Ijekavian) and alphabetic division (Cyrillic and Latin), Serbo-Croatian language unity, structurally, i.e. genetically and typologically, has been preserved so far."⁴⁷ His stance is therefore similar to that of Vuk Karadžić, i.e. that the shared standard is a Serbian dialect, but nevertheless

⁴⁶*Srpski jezik na kraju veka*, pg. 182.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

views them as variants of one language. Radovanović also notes that “a few word-categories of Croatian origin” had been assimilated into the Serbian variant, however he seems to minimize the danger of this phenomenon stating that “there area great number of Croatian words quite unacceptable to the Serbian language taste.”

So, while these examples show that linguistic modifications and reform are occurring and will likely continue to occur in Croatia and Serbia, these changes will evolve gradually rather than radically. What, I believe, this means for Bosnia is that there will most likely be a continued, albeit gradual, polarization of vocabulary in the Croatian and Serbian standards, and that the Bosnian variant, due to its central and multiethnic nature, will increasingly become dissimilar, with regard to vocabulary, to both. Doublets which were formerly officially treated as equal when there was in reality a clearly preferred form in Bosnia will be codified as such in official dictionaries and grammars in order to represent the true state of linguistic reality.

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