The Ethno-Linguistic Aspects of the Birth and the Death Rituals in Balkan Linguistics Context

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Abstract

The Balkan people, no matter how different they are, have been going through a historical and cultural cohesion, which is reflected in their linguistic identities, known as the Balkan concourse, defined within the geographical area. Starting from the premise that the word is the bearer of meaning, within its historical context concurrently the cultural complements the information. In this context, the well known Albanian linguist Eqrem Çabej in "Studime gjuhësore I" (Language Studies I), defines the word as history and he says: "history of language is a cultural history" or "history of words is the history of culture". Meanwhile, Elena Uzejnova in her ethnolinguistic studies of Slavic languages, treats lexemes not only as carriers of information denominator, but also entire cultural contexts of their functions.

All this serves as the basis of the ethno-cultural and linguistic survey of the cycles of life, birth and death, leaving aside the marital or folk calendar. Çabej considers that such ethnological issues are "remnants of old pagan times, who have dressed during the time the Christian clothes and later Islamic clothes, maintaining through this metamorphosis".

The term "childbirth", does not only giveinformation about women, but it also tells about a social function which is formalized as a general idea. In the Albanian language, the world for 'pregnant' is *e rëndë (heavy)*, which is also used in other languages; Serbo-Croatian: *bremena*; Bulgarian: *бременна*; Macedonian *тешка*; Romany: *phari*. The Turks of Macedonia used *gebe kadın / pregnant woman*, while those of Turkey used *hamile*, coming from Arabic language which means "heavy".

Equally interesting are expressions which are used in folk idioms for death as a natural and deep religious process.

Keywords: word, culture, cultural-lexeme, ethno-culture, ethno-linguistic.

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Balkan Dillerinde Doğum ve Ölüm Ritüellerinin Etno-Linguistik Yönleri

Özet

Ne kadar farklı olurlarsa olsunlar Balkan halkları tarihi ve kültürel açılardan birbirleriyle bağlantılıdırlar. Bu durum onların dil kimliklerine yansımış ve tanımlı bir coğrafi alanda Balkan birlikteliğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Öncülden başlayarak kelime tarihi bağlamı içinde anlamını içerir ve eşzamanlı olarak bilginin tamamlayıcısıdır. Bu bağlamda meşhur dilbilimci Eqrem Çabej, "Studime gjuhësore I" (Dil Araştırmaları I) başlıklı eserinde, kelimeyi tarih olarak tanımlar ve şöyle der: "dilin tarihi bir kültür tarihidir" veya "kelimelerin tarihi kültürün tarihidir". Bu arada, Elena Uzejnova'nın, Slav dillerinin etnolinguistik çalışmaları konulu eserinde sözcük birimlerini yalnızca bilgi paydası taşıyıcısı olarak değil bunun yanı sıra onların işlevlerinin bütün kültürel bağlamları açısından değerlendirir.

Bütün bunlar yaşam ve ölüm gibi yaşam döngüsü üzerine etno-külütrel ve dil araştırmalarının temeli olarak hizmet eder. Ancak ailevi ve foklor takvimi bunun dışındadır. Çabej, böyle etnolojik meseleleri "önce Hıristiyan, ilerleyen dönemde İslami elbise giyen eski pagan dönemlerin kalıntıları" olarak telakki etmektedir.

"doğum" terimi yalnızca kadın hakkında bilgi vermez, aynı zamanda genel bir fikir olarak biçimlenen sosyal işlevden söz eder. Arnavutça'da hamile kelimesi "e rëndë (yüklü)", anlamındadır. Bu anlam diğer diller içinde geçerlidir. Sırpça-Hırvatça'da "bremena", Bulgarca'da "бременна", Makedonca'da "тешка", Romence'de "phari"dir. Makedonya Türkleri "gebe kadın", Türkiye'de ise Arapça kökenli yüklü anlamında "hamile" derler.

Aynı derecede ilginç olan doğal ve derin dini süreç açısında ölüm için halk deyimlerinde kullanılan terimlerdir.

Anahtar kelimeler: kelime, kültürel-zöcük birimi, etno-kültür, etno-linguistik

Balkan is a synonym of different clashes among nations within, but despite these controversies, there has always been something that has been a knot of cohesion within the Balkan community. Anthropological and ethnological points of view, which are quite interesting and rich among those nations, were developed separately even though each of them was aware of the connection and multiple



similarities, no matter if it is in cultural terms, as well as linguistic terms.

Two of the life cycle processes, such as birth and death, prove this similarity by considering that the words of a language are not only on the function of naming, but these also carry on cultural information, being distinguished as *cultural lexemes*. In this context, linguistic reflex, together with cultural, becomes one and it promotes the interest of all conceivable outlooks on life-cycles that have been over crossed within the Balkan community.

1. Birth, as the process of creation of life is not only biological, but it is also of the social significance of the folk mentality, expressed in linguistic reflection. These reflections reveal the position of women within the family of Balkan society. Such is the "childbirth" lexeme which we find also in other languages of this linguistic area. Well known linguist Petar Skok considers the Serbo-Croatian lexeme "rađalica" as thought of a primitive society and that it was followed by the term "woman". Similar lexemes we find in the Mac. podunka and Bulg. podunka.

Here is a whole world of well known expressions and labels by women, formalized within their idioms as "women's language". Viewed in a broader context of Balkan linguistic area, there are lexical similarities within these topics. E.g. Alb. e rëndë/ pregnant; Mac. тешка, Bulg. тежък; Serbo-Croat. breme, in Rom. phari.³ Each of these languages, has other lexemes as well to express the condition of pregnancy, in some of these other forms are synonymous, but

³ Explanations and comparisons of Romany language in this text made by Trajko Petrovski from Skopje, scientific worker at the Institute of Folklore "Marko Cepenkov" Skopje.



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¹ In primitive society, the woman is considered just as "childbirth" / "rađalica", from which derives her name. Petar Skok, Etimologijski rječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskog jezika, Yugoslav Academy of Art and Scientific, Zagreb, 1971

². Explanations and comparisons in Bulgarian language in this text made by Anton Panchev from Sofia, scientific worker at the University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

incomplete and not used everywhere. The Albanian language recognizes lexemes such as: *me bark; me barrë;* in Slavic languages: *meгобна, на друг ред, на другу работу.* Recognizing intercultural influences, as well as linguistic, the parallels of lexical analogy are also found in Turkish language, knowk as so-called Balkan Turkish, which varies in terms of use. For example, Turks of Macedonia use *gebe kadın*/pregnant woman, while those in Turkey use *hamile*, coming from Arabic language *h-m-l*, which means "heavy". ⁵

These constructions show the richness of the language of women expression defined as "women's issues" and illustrative expression. From this also come expressions such as: Me barkun te goja (with the stomach up to the mouth); pregnant in the last month; Serbo-Croat. and Bosn. Trbuh do zube; Stomakom do zube; Bulg. С корем до брадичката; Mac. Стомак до заби; Turk. kordon; Rom.: Vogi dži ki guša. Main changes are at the second word of expressions: (barku) te goja/ (stomach) up to mouth; do zube/teeth; до брадичката/chin, and in the Romany language, the word quša/goiter is used.

The process of pregnancy goes through certain phases, for which there are characteristic expressions. E.g. Alb. *Ka hy në hënë të vet (It has entered in own moon)*; in the moon of child — when it is in the last month of the birth; Bosn. *Ušla u njen mesec*; Serbo-Croat. *Zači u breme*; Bulg. *Влязла е в девети месец*; Мас. *Навлезена е во деветти месец*; Turk. *dokuzuncu ayına girmiş*; Rom. *ale o divese olakere bijanibase*.

Folk speech is a rich depository of expressions of this thematic field. Here are used expressions such as: Alb. Ka dy shpirtra / Ha për dy shpirtra (It has two souls/Its eating for two souls), it means the mother and the child in the mother's stomach, pregnant; Serbo-Croat. dve duše; Mac. and the Bulg. ∂ ee ∂ ywu; Rom. Džuvli duje dušencar; Turk. iki canlı.

⁵ According to the explanation of Muharram Jahja, research associate of the Institute of Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of Albanians in Skopje.



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⁴ Миленко С. Филиповић, Обичаји и веровања у Скопској Котлини, Београд, 1939, 409.

The subject area expanded in terms of word formation and other expressions, which are part of the ethnic culture and in which also appeared lexical parallels. So e.g.: Janë të një barku (Are of the same stomach) means "brothers and sisters of a same mother", where "womb" and "stomach" appear as synonyms. We find this in Serbian and Croatian, but also in Bosnian, Iz jene utrobe apo Iz jednog trbuha; Bulg. and Mac. От една утроба/ Од една утроба. Rom. Kotar jekh vogi. This is the way to set out all the banal words, using as synonymous "bark" (stomach) and "nënë" (mother) and the family tie; e.g. Alb.; Janë të një nëne; Bulg. Те са от една майка; Mac. Tie se od edna majka; Turk. karındaş (brother, brother-sister), has to do with the stomach, respectively the words karın = stomach and daş = together, in unity. In Rom.: Kotar i jekh daj - meaning "child of one mother", but there is also an expression characteristic of Rom, that is meaningful jeering figurative synonymous with "mother" and "oven": Kotar i jek fura – have come from one oven. In Macedonian, e.g. used expressions related to agricultural work *ce откроила* – "prune" when the time before birth approaches.

Folk speech in the cultural sphere is preserving these names and keeps them alive. For example the word *llaus*, which means "the first month after the women have gave birth", as a form is the same as the Turkish word *loğusa* and has a wider use in dialectal Albanian spoken language (in Macedonia) compared with the synonym forms *lehonë*, both of the same etymology and is similar to Mac. neyhka; Bulg. nexyca; Serbian n'eyhka, which is a Greek word. In Bosnian language, implying an intercultural and religious influence, there is the word llausa. The Romany language also uses both forms of the same

⁷ Плотникова Ана А, Москва, Руска Федерација, Етнолингвистичка програма во македонскиот пункт на "Малиот дијалектолошки атлас на балканските јазици", www.iea.pmf.ukim.edu.mk/EAZ/EAZ-oo/Plotnikovamak-EAZ-oo.pdf, 29.6.2016.



⁶ So the word for brother in the Turkish language is *karındaş* that over time in the mid platoon word is removed to facilitate the pronunciation and so today we use the word *kardaş* or *kardeş* that etymology has the *karındaş*. Explanations by Muharram Jahja, a research associate of the Institute of Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of Albanians.

lexeme: *leusna* and *leunka*. These lexemes in Macedonian dialects have been recorded by Filipovič as well, who says: "This word the men do not mention, but only women among themselves". It covers the period from birth to 40 days, with the faith of protection of mother from evil. This we understand also from the folk expression "*llausja e ka varrin e çeltë*" ("*llausja*" has an open grave) or "*me një këmbë në varr*" (she is with one leg on the grave). The same idiom we can find among the Bosnians and Serbo-Croats.: Ženi 40 dana po porađaju ovoren grob i da je ona jednon nogom u grobu (The woman 40 days after giving birth has an open grave and she is with one leg on the grave). 9

In some local Albanian speeches in Macedonia another synonymous lexeme is ussed, which is of Turkish borrowing, such as *ebe* (Struga, Kicevo) for "midwife", which is also found in Serbo-Croatian and Bosnian, *bèjka*, *èba*, *hèba*. ¹⁰ But the most widespread is the Slavic lexemes "*babica*"; Mac. *δαδυμα*; Bulg. *δαδα*, Rom. *Babica*, which has passed in a ceremony at the party known as *babina*. It is strange that this is also widespread among the Muslim population (in Macedonia), too. The proper word would be *vigji/vigje*, which is used only in some local Albanian speech. ¹¹ The same one that is used in general Slavic terminology "*euáe*" means mother and baby gifts. ¹²

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www.iea.pmf.ukim.edu.mk/EAZ/EAZ-oo/Plotnikova-mak-EAZ-oo. pdf, 29.6.2016.



 $^{^{8}}$ Миленко С. Филиповић, Обичаји и веровања у Скопској Котлини, Београд, 1939, 410

⁹ Žepa-Narodna medicina i narodna verovanja, Radmila Filipović-Fabijanić, http://rogatica bih.blogspot.mk/2011/02/zepa-narodna-medicina-i <u>narodna.</u> Html ,19.2.2016.

Abdulah Škaljić, Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom jeziku, "Svetlost", Izdavačko Preduzeće, Sarajevo, 1966.

¹¹ Qemal Murati, Fjalor i fjalëve dhe shprehjeve nga trojet e shqipes në Maqedoni, Shkup, 2015, 21.

¹² Плотникова А. Ана, Москва, Руска Федерација, Етнолингвистичка програма во македонскиот пункт на "Малиот дијалектолошки атлас на балканските јазици",

Albanian	Serbo- Croatian and Bosnian	Bulgarian	Macedonian	Turkish	Romany
lindëse	Rađalica	родилка	Родилка	Dogurgan kadın	Dovogjendi romni
e rëndë	Bremena	Бреме	Тешка	hamile	Phari
Me barkun te goja	Trbuh do zube Stomako m do zuba	С корем до брадичка та	Стомак до заби	kordon	Vogi dži ki guša
Ka hy në hënë të vet	Zači u breme Ušla u njen mesec	Влязла е в девети месец	Навлезена е во деветти месец.	Dokuzuncu ayına girmiş	ale o divese olakere bijanibase
dy shpirtra	dve duše	две души	две души	İki canlı	Džuvli duje dušencar
Janë të një barku	Iz jene utrobe Iz jednog trbuha;	От една утроба	Од една утроба	Karındaş	Kotar jekh vogi
Janë të një nëne	Iz jedne majke	Те са от една майка	Тие се од една мајка	Bir anadan	Kotar i jekh daj
Llaus	Llausa			loğusa	Leusna
Lehonë	л'еунка, леуса	Лехуса	Леунка		Leunka



<i>babicë</i> = mami	бабица	баба	Бабица		babica
ebe= mami	bèjka, èba, hèba			ebe	mami
vigji/vigje = babinë	виѓе/ бабине, бабиње		виѓе		babina
Shterpë	štirkača, štirkinja	Щирица	штираквиц а		štirka

Lexemes of this semantic field are as the following: Alb. *shterpë*; Bulg. *μμρυμα*; Mac. *μπυρακβυμα*; Serbo-Croatian. *štirkača*, *štirkinja*.¹³ It is interesting to note that all interviewed women denied the use of the word *shterpë* for woman, taking it as the negative sense and offensive by creates an emotional burden to women. The basic meaning of this name is in use mainly for livestock. This question at the same time is part of taboo topics, which also did not speak anything more.

2. Death within anthropology is treated by many cultures as "one of the greatest natural mysteries through their beliefs in a certain kind of afterlife, in which the body or an extract of the dead is given back to the region from which comes, enters a completely new dimension, or simply revolves around the present world as soul (spirit)". ¹⁴ However, this is an anthropological view at the idea, which is realized in the linguistic plane that fully complies or somewhere partly explains the

¹⁴ Majkëll Alan Park, Hyrje në antropologji, Ars Lamina, Shkup, 2012, 306.



¹³ P. Skok, this lexeme gives from the latin "Sterlis" (International lexeme). Etimologijski rječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskoga jezika, Jugoslovenska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti, Zagreb, 1971.

many other ethno-cultural and ethno-linguistic issues to the peoples of the Balkans.

The concept of death is related to another immaterial world, based on principles of faith and religion, which can also explain these cycles. Death is explained as something "written", meaning by the power of God's will. E.g. shq. Ashtu e kishte të shkruar; Serbo-Croat.: Било му је сућено; Виlg. Било му е писано, било му е съдено; Мас. Му било пишано; Му било судено; Rom. Zamangljale o Devel; turq. oyle imiş yazıli. Or the other expression, Alb. E deshi Zoti; Dëshirë e Zotit; Serbo-Croat. Воžja želja; Виlg. Божия воля; Мас. Божја волја; Rom. Devleski volja; Turk. Allah yazgisi apo èmri-iláhī, which means "God's definition, the fate of God". This has reached some Serbo-Croatian dialects as well. 15

We can find a clearer concept on death on the epigraphs in cemeteries, which really express the idea of "death" and of the "rest", which can be regarded as euphemisms that we find in many languages. E.g. Alb. *Këtu pushon...*; Sebo-Croat. *Počivao (u miru...)*; Bulg. Почина. Мас. Овде почива... (роб божји). The first meaning of this lexeme- почине / почина is "rest". An idea conceived in this way is also known by other people outside the Balkans.

The concept of death in folk culture has created more expressions that are religious ideas, that life does not end here and that with death begins a world of eternal life. For example: Alb. *Ndërroi jetë...* This idea is expressed in the view that death is a journey into the world of eternal or displacements or the migrations of the spirit of the dead. Thus, derived are expressions such as: Alb. *Shkoi ...;* Mac. *omuðe на оној свет;* Bulg. *помина се -omuðe;* Rom.: *Gelo ko okova sveto —* went out of this world. Serbo-Croatian also used the expression conceived as a passage to another world: *preminuo - preminuli,* while Bosnian considers death as a displacement thought: *Preselio se...*

The concept and religious worldview enable similar expressions, as is the case in the Turkish language and culture. E.g. *Hakka yürüdü* that,

¹⁵ Abdulah Škaljić, Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom jeziku, "Svetlost", Izdavačko Preduzeće, Sarajevo, 1966.



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at literal sense, means "went, walked to Haqq (the Truth), therefore the Lord"; also: *Hakka kavuştu*: arrive, passed to the Truth (Haqq); *Allah'ın rahmetine kavuştu*: Passed to blessings of All-ah.¹⁶

The idea of death itself contains mystical faith, which is thought as the migration of the "soul" out of the body: Alb. Dha shpirt; Serbo-Croat. ispustiti dušu; Mac. го напушта душата — the soul abandoned the body; издъхна; испушти душа- gave the soul; душата му излезе — the soul got out the body; Bulg.: Той се от душа отдели — the soul separated from the body; Душата го напуска при настъпването на смърта — The soul leaves him during death; Rom. iklili oleskiri duša. In Turkish it is the same as in other languages: can verdi or Džan-teslim! That means, the soul is delivered to the Lord. Such expressions of Turkish in original have penetrated to the Bosnian and Serbian language as part of cultural interference, which is transferred to the spoken language and located in folk literature.

In this lexical area there are expressions that are euphemisms in the sense of death; Alb. *I mbylli sytë;* Serbo-Croat. *Zatvoriti oči;* Bulg. and Mac. *Затвори очи; Затвори очите;* Rom. *phangjla ple jakja.* However, there is also another expression: *Vdiq me sy hapur* /died with open eyes; Bulg. *Умря с отворени очи;* Mac. *Умре со отворени очи;* Rom. *Mulo pravde jakencar;* Turk. *gözü açık öldü;* takes the superstitious meaning and understanding that has nothing to do with any religious ideas. In folk concepts, death with open eyes is taken as tragic sign: "When the eyes of the dead remain open, or when the dead body do not get cold quickly, then it is a sign that someone else in the family will die. This belief is also present among Romanians", as well as other peoples of the Balkans, Serbs, Bulgarians, etc., they close the eyes of the dead person. But between the people it is more

¹⁷ Škaljić, Abdulah, Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom jeziku, "Svetlost", Izdavačko Preduzeće, Sarajevo, 1966.



¹⁶ Expressions *Hakka yürüdü, Hakka kavuştu* used from the Sufis, a mystical significance because of the word *haqq*, as well as one of the 99 beautiful names of God, which can be translated as the "Absolute Truth". Explanations by Muharram Jahja, a research associate of the Institute of Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of Albanians.

commonly believed that the deceased has gone with feeling of missing someone, usually indicated for children that were abroad and were not at home at the time of a parent's death.

Another dimension of this lexical field are expressions of condolence which reflect the idea of cultural and linguistic analogy. Thus the Turks of Macedonia, use the word of condolence *bıraktı*. The same one is used by the Albanians, *Na la;* e.g. *Anneniz braktı*: *Ju la nëna;* ¹⁸which is a form of question, after which responses comforted by the alleged loss of relatives, while comfort continues with the phrase "God Paradise". In this context of the expression of condolence used, as well and "*A e përcollët*" (Did you send it), alluding to "escort the hereafter" or an expression that is a complete translation from Turkish: "*Kryet shnosh!*" and the answer is "*Miqt shnosh*"! (Kicevo), Turkish "Başınız Sagolsun" – "Dostlar Sagolsun", while Bosnians use the original Turkish phrase *bašunasagōsum*. ¹⁹

Albanian	Serbo- Croatian and Bosnian	Bulgarian	Macedonian	Turkish	Romany
Ashtu e kishte të shkruar.	Bilo mu je suđeno.	Било му е писано. Било му е съдено	Му било пишано; Му било судено.	oyle imiş yazıli; èmri- iláhī	Zamanglja le o Devel
E deshi Zoti.	Božja želja.	Божия воля	Божја волја.	Allah yazgisi	Devleski volja

¹⁹ Abdulah Škaljić, Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom jeziku, "Svetlost", Izdavačko Preduzeće, Sarajevo, 1966.



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¹⁸ Explanations by Muharram Jahja, a research associate of the Institute of Cultural and Spiritual Heritage of Albanians.

Këtu pushon	Počivao (u miru)	Тук почива	Овде почива 	burada yatıyor	odote mulo
1. Ndërroi jetë					
2. Shkoi 3. Kaloi	3.Premin uo (preminu o- vdiq) Preselio se (u shpërngu I- vdiq)	2. Отиде си. Помина	2. Отиде на оној свет.	2. Hakka yürüdü; Hakka kavuştu: 3. Allahın rahmetine kavuştu	2. Gelo ko okova sveto 3. Nakhlja i dunja
Dha shpirt	ispustiti dušu	даде душа; душата му излезе душата го напуска при настъпва нето на смърта Душата го напуска	тои се от душа отели; испушти душа;;	can verdi; Can-teslim!	iklili oleskiri duša
I mbylli sytë	Zatvoriti oči	Затвори очи	Ги затвори очите	Gözlerini kapadı	phangjla ple jakja



Vdiq me	Umrjeti	Умря с	Умре со	gözü açık	Mulo
sy hapur	otvorenih	отворени	отворени	öldü	pravde
	očiju	очи	очи		jakencar

Conclusion

Various studies of Balcanic linguistic are based on common features, which are treating this well known area, which is becoming closer not only geographically, but also the influence of borrowing and giving through the centuries, on the field of linguistic and cultural relation. The interaction of this languages is reflected strongly on the peoples speeches, which are also the strongest protectors of the cultural and historical presence which often is treated as a problematic and conflict issue who's the song, who's the history, who's the holiday etc. This text is not having this intention, and the their positioning on the level of comparing speaks about various lexical connections, which are also holding the extralingustic and cultural information and like that could be the topic of historic, ethnographic and anthropological studies, and many other disciplines and sciences.

The ethnolinguistic more clearly is reflecting this connection, which is discovering the peoples mining and the way of living, through the cycles of life which are universal. Here are treated the lexemes of two important cycles on which is contained the whole collective philosophy about the birth and death, living out of the treatment the part of marriage and wedding or about the peoples calendar and which is making a whole linguistic and cultural volume.

This development doesn't belong only to the past, but is important also about the future, over crossing the geographical and regional definition overcoming the egocentric opinions of the scientist circles, to make stronger basis of wider observance in the mining if identifying of the problems, no matter if they are linguistic or cultural which are helping not only linguistic in general, but also other scientific disciplines.



Abbreviations

Alb. Albanian

Bosn. Bosnian

Bulg. Bulgarian

Mac. Macedonian

Rom. Romany

Serbo-Croat. Serbo-Croatian

Turk. Turkish

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