VICTOR A. FRIEDMAN
(Chicago — Skopje)

ON THE ORIGIN OF FINAL -*E* IN THE PLURAL OF THE VERBAL *L*-FORM IN MACEDONIAN: POSSIBLE CONTACT INFLUENCES

In addition to previous interpretations of the origin of final -*e* in the plural of the verbal *l*-form in Macedonian, the paper offers arguments for explaining the generalization of this marker of plurality as a result of Aromanian influence in the contact between the two languages.

Keywords: Macedonian, verbal *l*-form, marker of plurality, the plural marker -*e*, language contact, Aromanian.

Standard Macedonian and the western dialects on which it is based show a very specific development in the plural of the Common Slavic resultative participle in -*l*, which in Macedonian has lost its participial function completely and is used only in the formation of analytic paradigms of the verb, whence its modern name *verbal l-form*. The phenomenon in question is the generalization of the marker -*e* for the plural in all genders, e. g. masc. *napravil*, fem. *napravila*, neut. *napravilo*, pl. *napravile* 'did'. As is well known, the original markers in the plural were masc. -*i*, fem. -*y*, neut. -*a*. This leveling thus looks unusual at first glance, and while Koneski's convincing explanations cited below are relevant, I would suggest that there is also a heretofore unnoticed additional possible contributor to this instance of feature selection and leveling, namely contact with Aromanian.

Of relevance here is the fact that the feminine plural declension in question had an alternative marker, -*ę*, for soft stems, which marker in the dialects that became the former Serbo-Croatian was generalized at the expense of *y* here and elsewhere. Also well known is the merger of *y* and *i* in favor of *i* and the loss of nasality in *ę* ultimately yielding *e* in all the relevant dialects / languages.

With regard to markers of plurality it is worth noting that *i* and *e* can be said to be in competition in a number of environments. Thus, for example, whereas Bulgarian and eastern Macedonian dialects preserve the old

short *u*-stem nominative plural marker *-ove*, albeit with a different distri-
bution, in western Macedonian, as in the dialects to the north of it, the
pressure of the nominative plural in *-i* from other declensions resulted in
the shape *-ovi* (which form already existed in the dative singular of the
relevant declension). On the other hand, the predominance of *jat* in the
plural of the pronominal declension led to *-e* as the marker of plurality in
the definite article in all of Balkan Slavic. According to Koneski (1979:
144–145, 190–191), the *-e* added to Macedonian plural pronouns giving,
e. g. *nie, vie, tie* 'we, y'all, they' in the dialects on which the standard is
based, was part of a general innovation of adding particles to pronouns,
which pronouns, together with the 2 pl. present marker *-te*, then influenced
the formation of the 1 pl. present marker *-me* (older *-mŭ*), a change that
begins to appear already in the twelftfth-thirteenth century, in Ohrid texts,
which is also when *-le* begins to appear in plural resultative participles.
Koneski (1979: 182) connects these former generalizations with the gene-
ralization of *-e* in the *l*-form as in *nie sme bile* 'we have been', *vie ste bile*
'y'all have been'. The hypothesis of the influence of pronouns is
strengthened by the occurence of 1 pl. and 2 pl. copular forms *sne, sve*,
respectively, as well as the 1 pl. aorist *-vne* or *-fne* in some western dialects.

    Without disputing this formulation, we would like to add here, however,
further considerations that might have contributed to the outcome as we
have it today, namely language contact. At issue is the kind of genera-
lizing linguistic reanalysis that Gołąb (1984: 135) argues is behind the
shape of the *ima*-perfect (e. g., *imam napraveno* 'I have done'), albeit the
path is somewhat different. In the case of the *ima*-perfect Gołąb argues
that the fact that the verbal adjective (the descendent of the old past passive
paticiple) is neuter in these contructions reflects the Aromanian use of the
feminine participle, which also functions as the neuter insofar as in
Aromanian—and in Albanian—a distinct neuter gender is lost and the
feminine functions in its stead as the unmarked choice when gender is not
specifiable. There is also the phenomenon of nouns that are masculine in
the singular but feminine in the plural (sometimes called neuter nouns), a
phenomenon that does not have an inverse. This is an additional asso-
ciation of feminine gender with plurality. In the case of the generalization
of final *-e* as the plural marker in the verbal *l*-form in western Mace-
donian, the spread of *-e* could have combined with the generalization of *-e*
from the so-called soft ending *-ę* for the feminine plural here offers an
opening for hypothesizing at least some contact-influence in western
Macedonian. Two additional factors that suggest the participation of
Aromanian influence in the generalization of *-e* in the plural verbal *l*-form
are the facts that 1) the distribution of the generalization more or less

coincides with the distribution of the *ima*-perfect and 2) as Gołąb (1984: 135) has argued, contact between Macedonian and Aromanian in western Macedonia resulted in the mutual borrowing and re-borrowing of analytic past tense contructions. Thus, for example, *ésku mînkátu* was calqued on *sum jadel*, and then *jaden sum* was re-calqued on *ésku minkátu* all meaning 'I have eaten'. Under such circumstances an additional pressure from Aromanian in the direction of generalizing the feminine plural in the Macedonian verbal *l*-form is not out of the question.[1]

It is clear we have here a generalization that, on the one hand, competes with the generalization of *-i* as the plural marker in Macedonian, but, on the other hand, does have the support of *-e* in pronouns, the copula, and personal endings. To these factors can be added the fact that, from the point of view of competion between *y* and *ę* (> *i* and *e*, respectively), the influence of Slavic dialects to the north of Macedonian would have favored *-e* as seen in the generalization of the latter in the former Serbo-Croatian. Insofar as homonymy with the feminine singular would have put pressure on the elimination of the neuter plural *-a* in the *l*-form, as well as the fact that the merger of *y* and *i* would have put pressure on the feminine plural to select the soft ending *e* in order to remain distinct, the fact that this generalization of *-e* as the plural marker in the *l*-form occurs precisely in the zone where contact with Aromanian (and to a lesser or older extent Albanian) is strongest, leads us to suggest that the combination of the identification of *-e* with the feminine plural in the relevant part of South Slavic and the use of the feminine in forming the analytic past tense in Aromanian gave an additional analogical impetus to the generalization of *-e* as the plural marker in the verbal *l*-form in western Macedonian.

While this case of pattern-copying is by no means as clear as the beautiful example of doubled expressive adjectives in Slavic on the model of Turkish adduced by M. Ivić (1984), e. g. *golgoleničok* and *çırılçıplak* 'stark naked', nonetheless, given the intensive multilingual contact that has characterized the Balkans since the arrival of the Slavs (as well as in

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[1] To be sure, the earliest attestations of final *-e* in the plural of the old resultative particple coincide with the beginning of the denasalization of *ę* to *jat* (/ä/), and the subseuqent merger of /ä/ and /e/ took place later, albeit the beginning of that process was not much later (Koneski 1979: 59). To the north of Macedonian, however, the merger of the reflex of *ę* with *e* was accomplished earlier, without necessarily including *jat*, and at precisely the time when influences from the north began to affect Macedonian significantly. While the written record certainly suggests a native initiation of the generalization of *-e* in the plural of the verbal *l*-form, it does not rule out the possiblity of the additional pressure of contact with Aromanian in terms of feature selection between *-i* and *-e* in terms of competition. On the importance of feature selection in determining the outcomes of language contact see Mufwene (2001).

the millennia before that, of course), it is not without justification to re-flect on the variety of possibilities for contact-induced change. The fact that final *-e* begins to appear in resultative participles precisely when in-fluence begins to spread from north to south and that it reaches its furthest extent precisely in the region in contact with Aromanian allows us at least to hypothesize contact as one of several factors leading to what appears at first glance as an unusual analogical leveling.

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Р е з и м е

Виктор А. Фридман

О ПОРЕКЛУ ФИНАЛНОГ *-Е* У ОБЛИКУ МНОЖИНЕ ГЛАГОЛСКЕ *Л*-ФОРМЕ
У МАКЕДОНСКОМ: МОГУЋИ КОНТАКТНИ УТИЦАЈИ

Као допринос досадашњој дискусији о узроцима генерализације маркерâ за мно-жину у македонском језику (надовезујући се на тумачења Конеског и Голомба) аутор разматра факторе који су довели до уопштавања маркера *-е* за множину сва три рода пасивног партиципа у његовој модерној функцији глаголске *л*-форме. Као додатне аргу-менте у прилог већ постојеће тезе о арумунском утицају на развој ове генерализације аутор види чињеницу да се њен (изворно западномакедонски) ареал углавном подудара са дистрибуцијом *има*-перфекта и да је контакт македонског и арумунског језика у западној Македонији доводио до узајамног позајмљивања аналитичких перфектних конструкција.