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KARAVLACHS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TODAY

Abstract: This paper attempts to provide an anthropolinguistic insight into the Romanian vernaculars spoken by Karavlahs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Karavlahs of Bosnia — all Orthodox Christians, sometimes considered Gypsies by locals — and their network of settlements have been the subject of several ethnographical studies since the end of the nineteenth century. Following the civil wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, the network of settlements changed drastically. Fieldwork conducted in June 2006 in the town of Bijeljina and the village of Lopare showed that today the Karavlahs live in several scattered enclaves in the north of Republika Srpska: Batković (Bijeljina region), Lopare (Mt. Majevisa), Ostružnja (Doboj region) Sitnež and Devetinja (Banjaluka region), and to the northeast in small settlements near the town of Vlasenica. The inhabitants of the fair-sized Maoča settlement — about 150 houses — in the Mt. Majevisa area moved to the village of Batković or fled to Serbia. On the other hand, Batković village has a long-standing tradition of seasonal workers or *gastarbeiters* in Austria and Sweden. Local Romanian vernaculars (*ludărește*) have never been supported by the school system or media and today have a restricted home usage or are employed as a sort of secret language. Within the same Romanian vernacular, Karavlahs have developed several secret words to replace local ethnonyms easily understood by other groups, outsiders (e.g. Muslims > *Cârstaț*, Croats > *Șoacăț*, Serb > *B'otu*). Linguistic analysis of collected folklore texts connected to the traditional custom of “Lazarica”, sung in Serbian, sheds some light on the road possibly travelled by the Karavlah from the Romanian language regions to Bosnia.

Key words: Romanian vernacular, ethnic mimicry, perceptual dialectology, secret language

This paper forms part of the discussions and field reports on the ethnolinguistic vitality of the small ethnic group of the Bayash, submitted at the Balkan linguistics conferences in Sofia in 2002 and St Petersburg in 2004 (Sikimić 2003, 2005a). Here we present a brief insight into the current situation of Romanian vernaculars spoken by the Karavlahs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on fieldwork conducted in 2006 in the village of Lopare. The Karavlahs of Bosnia — all Orthodox Christians, sometimes considered Gypsies by locals — and their network of settlements have been the subject of several ethnographic studies, if very few linguistic ones, having been ‘discovered’ by the academic public in the late nineteenth century. The most comprehensive — and controversial — is an ethnographic study by Teodor Filipescu, published in 1907 in a reliable scientific journal of the time: the *Glasnik zemaljskog muzeja u Sarajevu* (the Herald of the National Museum in Sarajevo).

The scientific dispute over Karavlach ethnicity began in the early 20th century between Serbian ethnologist Tihomir Djordjević (1907, 1907a) and Romanian researcher, Isidor Ieșan, over data contained in the latter’s monograph of 1906:

Mr Ješan mentions Orthodox Romanians in the Vlasenica district and their well-preserved nationality. They moved to this region a long time ago, perhaps during the time of the Romanian struggles against the Turks on the left bank of the Danube... But Mr Ješan should know that these are not Romanians but Romanian Gypsies, of whom there are many in Serbia and Bulgaria. Weigand personally discovered them 1889 in Albania, somewhere between Elbasan and Berat.

Tihomir Djordjević here refers to a well-known study by Gustav Weigand “Die Aromunen” (1888). According to another Romanian author, Teodor Filipescu (1907: 239), Bosnian Karavlahs of the early 20th century would not agree to being described as Gypsies, and this firm opinion on the Karavlahs’ ethnic origin is shared by Filipescu himself (“The Karavlahs are Romanians by origin and not Gypsies”). Linguist Gustav Weigand (1908: 174–175) also disputes the opinions of Ieșan and Filipescu, partly because of a long conversation he had with a Karavlach from Maoča. The debate on the ethnic origin of the Karavlahs and Bayash continued at intervals throughout the 20th century. This debate has recently been analysed from the Romanian perspective by anthropologist Otilia Hedeșan (2005: 16–24).

Post-war ethnologists call the Karavlahs “Gypsies”, “Romanian Gypsies”, “Vlach-speaking Gypsies” etc. (cf. Pavković 1957; Filipović 1969: 47, Radovanović 1994: 183–184, 191, 198 etc. *passim*), but lately authors refrain from explicit ethnic attributes (Popović 2002; on the

tinkers of Čipuljić, Drljača 2005). Nevertheless, as they had declared themselves in the census as Serbs and not as Roma, Karavlahs were mentioned as such by some Bosnian NGOs in 2000: (<http://www.aimpress.ch/dyn/trae/archive/data/200011/01105-006-trae-sar.htm>)

There are several other Roma communities in Republika Srpska. The Mauro–Vlahs are Orthodox Christian Roma of Romanian origin. They have been living in what is now Republika Srpska for over 300 years. They are fairly well integrated into the local community and have their own homes and stable settlements. The survey shows that one member of each family works in Western Europe. They are quite well off and their children attend school. The largest communities are at Mali Sitneš near Srbac, Devetina near Hrvačani, Batković near Bijeljina, and Ostružnja near Doboj [mistakes in the names of Bayash settlements have been corrected].

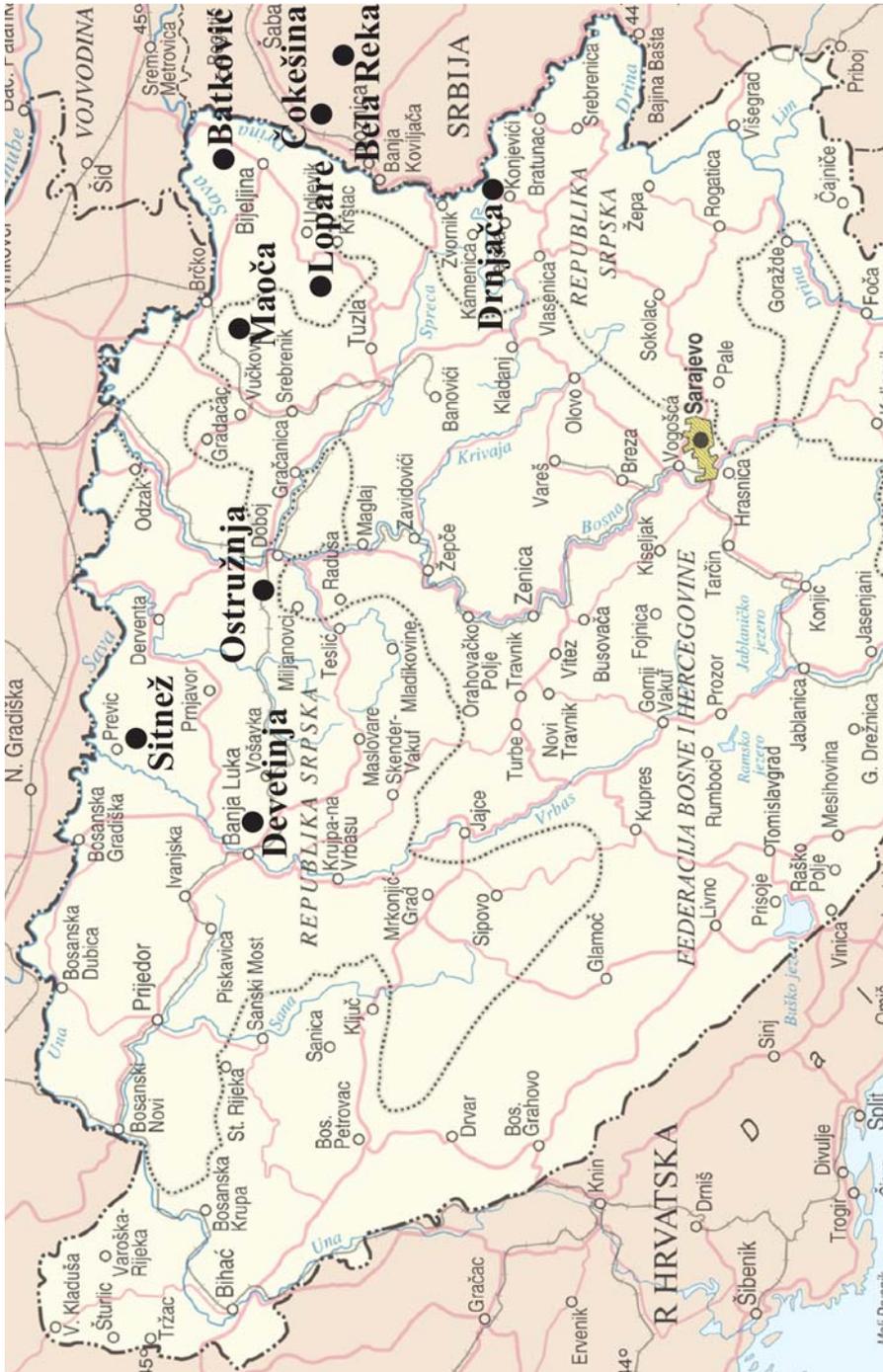
This paper will consist of three sections:

1. The current ethnolinguistic situation of Romanian Karavlah vernaculars and a reconstruction of the Karavlah network of nodes, based on data obtained by the methods of perceptive dialectology.
2. The usage of the Romanian vernacular as a secret language and even a developed lexical subsystem to cover several ‘salient’ terms (in this case — ethnonyms)
3. The linguistic analysis of collected folklore texts connected to the traditional custom of “Lazarica”, sung in Serbian, which sheds some light on the road possibly traveled by the Karavlah from the Romanian language regions to their present settlements in Bosnia.

1. Karavlahs in Northern Bosnia

Filipesku (1907) mentions nineteen Karavlah settlements in Bosnia, most of them in the north and some not easily identifiable today, over a hundred years later. Some of Filipesku’s settlements were very small even in his time, the majority just neighbourhoods of some larger non-Karavlah settlements and known under different names.¹

¹ Filipesku’s list of Karavlah settlements in Bosnia (1907): *Purkovići* (probably close to Kalesija); *Simići* (an hour’s walk from Vlasenica, close to the river Tišća); *Knežina* (close to the river Bioštica, Vlasenica region), *Jadar* (south of Srebrenica, close to the villages of Brežani and Čičevac), *Kusonje — Ljeskovica*; *Kamenica* (close to Kusonje, by the river Drinjača); *Lopare*; *Modran*; *Batković*; *Maoča* (these four settlements are in the Bijeljina region); the following seven settlements are in the Tešanj region: *Špionica*; *Nemila*; *Vozuća*; *Ostružnja*; *Prača*; *Stanari*; *Pribinić*; the village of *Slatina* (close to Banjaluka) and *Sitnjež* (Srbac region).



These diffuse speech communities were seen as such even later, in the mid-twentieth century, by the famous Bosnian romologist Rade Uhlik (1955: 58):

One small migration wave of Romanian Gypsies reached Bosnia. These newcomers, known as Karavlası, or Kalavrası established about twenty settlements in northern and eastern Bosnia, mainly in the Tuzla and Banjaluka districts. They were never a numerous population, until World War II about one thousand and few hundred people. After the war, less than a thousand remained in the Bijeljina region as a compact community, and the rest, scattered in small communities, have almost disappeared. Although Karavlası dislike Gypsies and want to draw a clear line between them, they are nonetheless considered Gypsies.

Ethnographer Milenko Filipović (1969: 47–48) in his study of the Majeveca Mountain region mentions a small group of “Romanian Gypsies”, called Karavlası in the village of Lopare. According to his 1966 field research they came from the Ardeal region (*Erdelj*), their ancestors being *lingurari* (wooden spoon makers) and *gonari* (wooden tub makers). Filipović (1969: 48) cites the year 1725, under the Austrian occupation, as the first historical mention of Karavlası in the Bijeljina region. According to one item of information provided by Teodor Filipescu (1907: 350), the Karavlası settled in the Vlasenica region in 1804, when one of their ancestors crossed the River Sava at Mitrovica, therefore from Austro-Hungary. The linguistic data we obtained in the village of Lopare indicate that the settling would have certainly taken place in several waves and from various directions, which is also a view shared by Filipescu (1907: 339).

According to field research by anthropologist and geographer Vojislav Radovanović from 1947 to 1949, there were Karavlası in northwest Serbia who had been moved there from Bosnia. These are to be found at Čokešina: the families of Krajišniković, Kostić, Marinković, Mitrović, settled there from Bosnia in 1876 as they fled from the war raging near Bijeljina, and from the settlement of Bela Reka — the families Mitrović — “Vlach Gypsies from Lopare village” — and Jovanović “from Lopare”, settled there in the second half of the 19th century (Radovanović 1994: 184, 198, 199).² For these anthropological and geographical reasons, the dialectological description of the Romanian speech of Čokešina village given by Emil Petrovici (1938) is entirely relevant to at least some of the

² Historian Milorad Ekmečić (1996: 281–284), in his study on the Bosnian uprising (1875–78) mentions the attack of the Serbian army on the town of Bijeljina during July 1876. The war operations of the Serbian army in northern Bosnia lasted till the middle of September 1876. On refugees from Bosnia and attempts to forced return from Serbia during 1877 see Ekmečić 1996: 312–313.

Karavlach speech variants in Bosnia. There is a certain limitation as a published transcript of the Petrovici interviews speaks of their moving there from the town of Šabac in northern Serbia. Thanks to the colonization of the Banat by the Bayash/Karavlahs following World War II, the Romanian speech variants of Čokešina can nowadays be studied in the south Banat village of Omoljica (Sikimić 2007b).

After the civil wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, the network of Karavlach settlements again changed drastically. Some remnants of scattered groups from Bosnia were recently studied in the outskirts of the town of Priboj, in southwest Serbia (Sikimić 2006).³

Our fieldwork took place on 7–8th June 2006 in the town of Bijeljina and in Lopare in the Mt. Majevisa area. The Karavlach community in the suburb of Lopare practically disappeared in the Holocaust of World War II. Some who were small children at the time survived to later rebuild the settlement (Filipović 1969: 48). In June 1944, as a plaque at the entrance to the settlement testifies, 58 Karavlahs were killed in the village of Lopare. Forty years ago, while ethnologist Milenko Filipović was doing research there, there were 14 houses, including some more recent settlers from Ostružnja near Doboj and Maoča on Mt. Majevisa.⁴

The Karavlahs in the suburb of Lopare today say that Karavlahs live in several scattered enclaves in the north of Republika Srpska, the first and the largest being the village of *Batković* near Bijeljina; the second, a small community of only seven houses in *Lopare* near Mt. Majevisa, *Ostružnja* near Doboj, the two villages of *Sitnež* and *Devetinja* in the Banjaluka region, and several settlements to the northeast near the town of Vlasenica, the largest settlement now being *Drinjača*. The inhabitants of the former sizeable settlement of *Maoča* (Mt. Majevisa) — about 150 houses — moved to *Batković* or fled to Serbia. *Batković* village and the Banjaluka region also has a long tradition of seasonal guest workers (*gastarbeiters*) in Austria and Sweden.

³ In recent years many papers and one collection of works appeared (*Bayash in the Balkans, Identity of an ethnic community*, Belgrade 2005) based on fieldwork between 2002 and the present. The research data are still not available to the academic public because they were published only in Serbian, but contain transcriptions of conversations in Bayash Romanian vernaculars translated into Serbian (Sorescu Marinković 2005, Sikimić 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2007b). Sorescu Marinković 2007, Sikimić 2005a, 2006c, 2007a are available in English.

⁴ The field research of the Karavlahs was initiated and organized by historian Zdravko Antonić, to whom the author of this work is especially grateful. Linguistic analysis of Karavlach speech patterns is based on six hours of audio material.

The Bayash/Karavlach migrations, therefore, must be viewed as a consequence of local conflict and wars and not only of the nomadic and semi-nomadic way of life of this community.

2. Perceptual dialectology data

From a dialectological point of view, the Karavlach vernaculars in Bosnia belong to the group that we can call ‘Balkan Bayash Romanian vernaculars’, described for the first time by Romanian linguist Emil Petrovici in 1938. His description of the Čokešina vernacular in Western Serbia, close to the border with Bosnia, is likely to be valid for all the Bosnia Karavlach contemporary vernaculars. According to Asenova/Aleksova (this volume), Balkan Bayash or Rudari vernaculars are mixed; there is a variance of opinion among Romanian linguists and anthropologists as to their dialectological origin (cf. Radić/Tomici 1986; Calota 1995; Sarmandu 1997; Hedešan 2005).

The reliability of perceptive dialectology data obtained through interviews with the members of this small community is borne out by the observations of Filipesku (1907: 352):

Karavlahs from the village of Purkovići do not marry women from their own village, they take girls from other Karavlach settlements, this is the reason why all the families have relatives throughout the Karavlach settlements in Bosnia.

The reliability of the trans-border knowledge the Karavlach and Bayash community had of themselves, without any media or institutionalized support, was in some measure due to the great mobility of members of these groups, strict endogamy — until very recently — notwithstanding territorial dispersion — and the tradition of seasonal migrations, defined as semi-nomadic.

From fieldwork since 2002 among Romanian-speaking groups in South Slavic vernacular surroundings, we can reconstruct a sort of Bayash continuum along the River Sava, similar to the River Drava continuum described by Sorescu–Marinković in this collection. For the Karavlahs (we use this name for the Bayash group from Bosnia) the Sava is not a boundary, the same Bayash ethnolinguistic type being found on both sides of the river which forms the border between the now two separate countries: Croatia on the one side and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the other. The case with the River Drina is similar, with Karavlach/Bayash settlements being found on both sides, but only in its northernmost regions, today two different countries, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The following discussion was held in the small Karavlach community of *Gudura* on the outskirts of Lopare, today consisting of less than twenty people. The speakers are a man [M] born in the settlement of Lopare and a woman [W] from Kalesija, approximately 30 km to the southeast. The informants, as might be expected of spontaneous statements from the perceptive dialectology aspect, see local differences as lexical (*scaunu* vs. *stol*; *vița* vs. *baira*). In this interview, the researcher raises a lexical question (the term for ‘comb’) which is key for the classification of Bayash vernaculars (Weigand 1908: 175; Petrovici 1938: 228). However, this perceptive distinction of two local speech patterns is spontaneously initiated at the outset by the informants though a dialectologically significant difference in the stressed *-e-*, when the following syllable contains an *-e-*, or *-i-* (*<e>*): *lemne* vs. *l’amni*, cf. Petrovici 1938: 228 and Soresku–Marinković in this volume. (The researcher’s interventions are in round brackets):

[1]

W: Ali između nas ima razlike, priče. Između, ja ovo odakle sam ja, mi drukčije pričamo. Oni kažu l’amne, **lemne**, a mi kažemo **l’amni**.

(Aha, pa to je velika razlika.)

M: Ona kaže, znaš šta je drvo?

(Lemn.)

M: E, lemn. Dobro, **ti kažeš u originalu**. A mi kažemo **l’emn. L’**.

W: A vidiš, oni kažu stolci **scaunu**, a mi kažemo **stol**. Drukčije imamo dosta riječi.

(Kako kažete ‘češalj’?)

W: **T’aptenil’i**.

(A vi?)

M: **P’epteni**.

W: Oni kažu užetu **vița**, a mi kažemo **baira**. Baira, ja.

[W: But there are some differences among us, how we talk. Between, me, where I’m from, we talk differently. They say **lemne** for *l’amne* (wood), but we say **l’amni**.

(I see. That’s a big difference.)

M: She says, do you know what ‘wood’ is?

(Lemn.)

M: Right, *lemn*. Good, you say that in original. But we say **l’emn. L’**.

W: But you see, they call a chair **scaunu**, and we say **stol**. We have a lot of different words.

(How do you say ‘comb’?)

W: **T’aptenil’i**.

(And you?)

M: **P’epteni**.

W: They say **vița** for rope, and we say **baira**. Baira, yeah.]

The two existing variants of Karavlach speech mentioned in the conversation are perceived by local speakers as variants confronting a third variant. The Romanian vernacular of the researcher (given in round brackets), is perceived as ‘the original’, despite the fact that the researcher was not a native speaker of Romanian and was always trying to adjust to the local Romanian vernacular. Possession of the ‘original’, ‘true’, ‘authentic’ Romanian language is automatically attributed to the person of prestige status, such as a researcher from Belgrade in a small Karavlach community. This linguistic prestige was not accorded to the same researcher in the compact, autochthonous Romanian communities in Serbia, and especially not in the Banat (Sikimić 2006d).

Here we would like to point out the implications of recognised socio-linguistic opinion, especially for small, diffuse language communities, that dialect or language contact often leads to the structural assimilation of one variety into the other, or the assimilation of both. There are various ways of explaining which linguistic structures undergo such convergence and which do not. One predicts that what is perceived by the speakers as ‘salient’ in one variety is taken over more easily and faster by the other than what is perceived as ‘less salient’, while ‘more salient’ features of the assimilating variety may be given up more readily than ‘less salient’ ones. With the other words, dialect features which are perceived by the speakers as ‘salient’ are taken up and given up more easily and faster than those which are perceived as ‘less salient’ (Auer/Barden/Grosskopf 1998: 163).

3. Romanian as a secret language

The local Romanian Karavlach vernacular, under the endonym *ludărește*, is a relict of the old ethnonym *Rudari*, now unusual because it is a homonym for a S/Cr word meaning ‘miners’. It has never been supported by the school system or media and today has a restricted home usage or is employed as a sort of secret language. (The term is still present among the Bulgarian Bayash.) Within the same vernacular, the Karavlachs also developed several secret words to replace easily understandable local ethnonyms (e.g. Turks > *Cârstaț*, Croat > *Șoacă*, Serb > *Bl’otu*). The complex ethnic situation in Bosnia is precisely defined at lexical level, in contrast to the identification of Serbs in Serbia as the *sel’as*, peasants, in opposition to the Bayash.

This special lexicon is used in socially delicate situations, mainly conspiratorially but also with an expressive function. The Karavlach secret term *bl’ot* has been confirmed as regional in Romanian, cf. Bulgăr/Con-

stantinescu-Dobridor 2003, 2003 (s.v. *bleot*, *bleatǎ*) in the meaning of ‘stupid person, fool, boor’. Semantically comparable data come from Aromanian sources (Liaku-Anovska 2000: 52). The Aromanians call Bulgarians and Macedonians *zdangǎnj* ‘boor, rude person, impudent person.’ (The single term for Bulgarian and Macedonian is *vǎrgǎreshce*, Liaku-Anovska 1995: 219). Other testified Aromanian terms are: *subtsǎri* Greeks: ‘thin, shallow brain’; *portsi shi lǎvoshi* Serbs: ‘pigs and loathsome’; *purintsǎ*: Muslims: ‘those who do not eat meat.’ (For the etymology of the lexeme and its prevalence in south-Slav secret languages see Вучковић 2004); *mocani* Romanians: ‘shepherds, boors, rude people, impudent people.’

[2] A fost o țără promienă, că toți era **cârstaț**. Știi ce e **cârstaț**? — Turci. — Știi? Nu știi ce e **cârstaț**? (Nu.) Pa, turci. — Muslimani. (Așa se spune?) Ludărește. — La noi zici ludărește **cârstaț**. **Cârstaț** să zăce. — **Cârstațâl’i**, Turci. — Nu put’em s-zăcem **turci** că dă ce tu știi turci când zăcea, ca între noi, zăce, uite **cârstatu**. **Cârstatu**. Razumești. [...] Ș-acuma, vezi, Bilja, a fost și **șoacăț**, normalno. (**Șoacăț** e Hrvat?) Ja, ja. — Hrvatska, da. (Și cum spuneți la sârbi? **Sel’aci**, sau?) **Bl’otu**. **Bl’otu**. (A bl’otu e sârb?) Da. **Bl’otu**. [...] **B’otu** zăce la sârb. (Dacă spui sârbu el razumește.) Da, razum’ește, da zăce **bl’otu**, nu știe. Șî noi, acuma, știi, o țără a fost samo **sârbi**, a fost, dă ajută, Stano, Bosanski Novi. Noi am fost jedno patru-cinci **bl’oț**. Știi, cu **bl’oți** lucram în brigadă noi, a fost un **cârstat** cu noi, jedno șasă a fost.

[It was a small change, all of them were **cârstaț**. Do you know what **cârstaț** means? — Turks. — Do you know? You don’t know what **cârstaț** means? (No.) Well, Turks. — Muslims. (You say it like that?) In Ludari language — We in Ludari language say **cârstaț**. **Cârstaț** we say. — **Cârstațâl’i**, Turks.—We can’t say Turks because you understand when someone says ‘Turks’, among us we say **cârstatu**. **Cârstatu**. You know. [...] And now, you see, Bilja, there were **șoacăț**, all right. (**Șoacăț** is Croat?) Yes, yes. — Croatia, yes. (And how do you call Serbs? **Sel’aci**, or...?) **Bl’otu**. **Bl’otu**. (And **Bl’otu** is Serb?) Yes. **Bl’otu**. [...] **B’otu** we say for a Serb. (If you say Serb he will understand?) Yes, he will understand, and if you say **Bl’otu**, he doesn’t know. And we now, you know, there were just Serbs, they were, help me, Stana, Bosanski Novi. We were about four-five **bl’oț**. You know, we were working in a brigade with **bl’oți**, and there was one **Cârstat** with us, about six of us.]

Although perceived as ‘secret’, the term *Šokac* is in fact a common regional term for a specific Croat group (for a detailed cultural interpretation of this ethnonym see Filipović 1967). In the next example, in the same utterance the secret term for Serbian women (*bl’oatǎ*) and the usual one for Croat women (*Rvatiță*) are used. The local term for a

Muslim woman is *cadână*, which cannot be perceived as being ‘secret’ either; it is also registered by Filipescu (1907: 236) with the meaning ‘Turkish girl’. From the sociolinguistic standpoint the local perception of the term *Șoacă* as a ‘secret’ one is important, it fits into the system. This is an example for the expressive function of the secret lexicon. The words in bold letters are recent lexical borrowings which illustrate the level of hybridization in Karavlach Romanian speech:

[3] Io mă uit, întreb io, pă **rețepție**, o bl’oată, era bl’oată **pravo**, nu era rvatiță, **nego** bl’oată. Avea **možda**, **u ono vreme**, **a jedno** cinzăci și doa și trei d-ai, așa. **Možda** așa **doba** mea era atunci.

[I am looking, I am asking, at the reception, bl’oată, she was a real bl’oată, she was not a Croat, but bl’oată. At that time, she might be about fifty two, three years old, something like that. Perhaps about my age at that time.]

Serious social insecurity is a good context for using the codes of conspiracy. The Karavlach system is obliged to hide the recently borrowed term *milicija* (police) as a ‘salient’ one and considered to be not secret enough, although phonetically adapted to the Karavlach system. Because the secret term *poieñi* ‘policemen’ — registered only in the plural — is denied by our informants as being polysemic, it can be interpreted as a semantic shift meaning ‘keeper of the field’ > ‘policeman’. (In S/Cr the terms *poljak*, *poljar*, a person who works in the fields in the meaning ‘keeper of the field’, comes from the same base). A similar semantic equation has been confirmed with the Bayash in Baranja, Croatia (*pandur* ‘policeman’ = *lugar* ‘forester’, cf. Sorescu–Marinković in this volume, transcript number 3) and is certainly connected to the traditional craft of the Bayash, which is the making of wooden objects.

[4] Aia, sora mea mândră, a-nceput pl’izňala, a-nceput aia, prva pomoć, itna, noi zăcem **poieñi** mil’iňaia, **poieñili**, mil’iňaia, da. (N-am auzit.) E, **poieñi**. Nu zăcem: ete viñe mil’iňaia, znači i oni znaju, nego **poieñili**, aia să știe. (A šta bi to inače značilo vama, jel ima još neko značenje?) Znaš šta znači? Da-t kažem. Kad kažeš — evo milicije, znaš, isto milicija. A **poieñi** — mil’iňaia. (A da li ta reč poieñi još nešto znači?) Ništa više. (Nema neko drugo značenje?) Da ne bi oni doznali to. — Da ne bi oni znali. — Da se priča o-njima, da oni idu vamo. — Zăcea: vin **poieñili**, mil’iňaia.

[That, my beautiful sister, the shooting started, this started, first aid, emergency squad, we say **poieñi**, police, **poieñi**, police, yes. (I haven’t heard it.) Yes, **poieñi**. We don’t say — here come the police, that would mean they could also understand, we say **poieñi**, we understand. (What might it also mean to you, does it have any other meaning?). You know what it means? I will tell you. When you say — here comes the police, you know, the same, police. But **poieñi** — police. (But this word **poieñi** does it have any other

meaning?) Nothing else. (No other meaning?) So that they don't find out. — So that they don't know. — That we're talking about them, that they are coming this way. They say: here come the **poieñi**, police.]

As is usual for semantic information obtained from field work, this term is explained in context, quoted as it is used, thus marking the necessity of concealing its true meaning: *ete viñe mil'iñâia; Kad kažeš — evo milicije* ' [‘Here come the police; when you say — It's the police’].

In all these examples, it is clear that this is not the use of Romanian as a secret language within the family (as is the case in those Bayash communities in Serbia where it is used only by the older generation to hide something from the children), nor its use in public, as a secret language not understood by the non-Bayash. The opportunities to use Romanian in this way in Serbia are limited to communities where there are no other Romanian language speakers (Romanians, Vlachs). On the other hand, they are almost unlimited in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

4. Tracing the Karavlach road to Bosnia: ethnolinguistic evidence

Filipesku gives a detailed description of Romanian traditional customs still existant in 1907. He noted the custom of pouring water for the dead after 40 days only in Maoča, where water is poured over a hempen ligature used to bind the deceased's legs. Among customs of the calendar cycle mentioned by Filipesku 1907, we should point out a fragment related to Đurđevdan, when a piece of turf — a clump of earth with grass — is dug up and then stood on. This custom is practised at Easter in numerous Romanian speaking communities in Serbia. The same custom is practiced among the Vlach Roma communities of some Serbian Banat settlements: as a field research of June 2008 showed, in the Romanian villages of Ritiševo i Straža it is today practiced only by the Vlach Roma; in the Serbian village of Bavanište it is also practiced only by the Vlach Roma (Sikimić 2007c: 164). This custom, which is still linked by calendar to Đurđevdan, has been preserved in Lopare to this day, under the common Romanian term *brazdă*.

From the ethnolinguistic point of view, Karavlach girls and women are well known to practise the traditional custom of “Lazarica”, but sing only in the local Serbian vernacular.

Linguistic analysis of this reduced and deformed fragment of the Lazarica song yields a form of the instrumental atypical in the local vernaculars of Lopare. In fact this form *Da nas lepo daruje, sas belice parice* is typical of the Prizren Timok zone and some vernaculars of the

Kosovo-Resava dialect spoken in northeast Serbia. We can assume that the entire text was adopted somewhere in that region and transferred to north and northeast Bosnia.⁵ I must add that the Bayash in northeast Serbia living among Romanian-speaking Vlachs still remember and even practice *Lazarica* or the *Lazara* custom in Romanian language.

[5] Lazariți'l'i iaște. Iaște, i asta a jocat. [...] Pă postu Paștului. — Pă postu Pașcului, majke. (Se pazește običaj?) Ja, da, da. P-ai cea iaști, običaj. (Și ce cântă?) Ova kuća bogata. (În sârbește cântă? Poți să cânti?) Nu cânta ea, cânta doi inși alți. A ea jocă. (Cu ce?) Cu, dân tambură cântă. — A-a, ea jocă așa, sângură jocă. — Ea joacă așa. A mumă să cântă dân gură. Și tat-su, eti. Și dân tambură cântă tat-său. A ea joacă. Mumă-sa și tat-su cântă dân gură și dân tambură. — Ova kuća bogata, puna ramna dukata. Ponajviše goveda, okreni se, lazarko. [...] Ovom gazdi za zdravlje, da su živi ove gazde, i ove gazde gazdarice. [...] Da nas lepo daruje, sas belice parice. — Da nas lepo daruje, sas berice jajce i bijele parice. (Se merge la Lazareva subota?) Mearge tot postu pașcului. — Ii pl'acă tot postu pașcului. (Când se începe?) S-înceapă la. — La Todorova subota. — La Todorova subota. Aića tot postu pl'acă. Do Lazara. Lazardan je zadnji dan. Lazarke. E, ea-a jocat svi pet sedmica.

[There are *lazariți'l'i*. There are, this one too was dancing. [...] During Lent. — During Lent, my son. (Do you still keep this custom?) Yes, yes, yes. Over here there is this custom. (And what do they sing?) Let this house be rich. (Do you sing in Serbian? Can you sing this?) She doesn't sing, two other people sing. She dances. (To what?) To, they play the tambură. — No, she dances just like that, she dances by herself. — She dances like that. And her mother sings. And her father, so. And her father plays the *tambură*. And she dances. Her mother and her father sing and play the *tambură*. — This house is rich, filled to the top with gold coins. Even more cattle, turn around, lazarko. [...] For this lord's health, long live this lord and lady, and this lady of the house. [...] To make us a fine present of white coins. — To make us a fine present of a white egg and white coins. (They go on St Lazarus's Saturday?) They go during all of Lent. — They go during all of Lent. (When do they start?) They start on. — On St Theodor's Saturday. — On St Theodor's Saturday. Here they go during the whole of Lent. Till St Lazarus's day. St Lazarus's day is the last day. *Lazarke*. She was dancing all five weeks.]

The transcript continues to show consistent phonetic differences in the speech of the two informants in Lopare village. The folklore text is conservative in linguistic terms. The transcript shows that the folklore text, in this example — the “Lazarica” song — tends to be translated from

⁵ A dialectological picture of Serbian speech patterns on Mt. Majejica is provided in Radovanović 1999, 2000 and 2002.

one dialect into another, here from ekavian into jekavian (*belice parice / bijele parice*). There is also important supporting information from Donja Tuzla in 1904, reported by Filipescu (1907: 224), that the Karavlach women as Lazaricas [women singing the Lazarica songs] “sing very beautiful folk songs and dance folk dances, for the most part old-Serbian”.

5. Whose tradition?

To study the intangible heritage of a mobile group such as the Karavlachs is to see the customary analytic methods of Slav ethnolinguistics and ethnolinguistic geography in an entirely different light. Information obtained from the Karavlachs of northern Bosnia tend to make the established isoglosses of traditional ‘south Slav’ rituals and customs rather relative.

[6] Ona je, jedna, ali bań și bań zarad’aște. Dă lumea bań, nakiće, marama, krpe, așa dă mâncare, svega. [...] (Și când pleacă lazarițiĭi, la fiecare casă? La svaka kuća?) La svaka kuća ide. Toată casa joacă, und’e go viñe. — Pl’acă în Priboi, pl’acă în Tobut, pl’acă L’ipoviț. Pl’acă Iablañiță. (Cum pleacă atunci, cu auto?) Cu autobusu. — Pl’acă, autobuzu pl’acă. — Cu caru, neko kola uzima pa sjedaju, pa. — Da, ea și tat-su și mumă-sa. Eto. (Și svako dan se face asta? Sâmbata, duminică?) Da, da. Toată zua pl’acă. Ide svaki dan. Donese para najviše. (Jel to i ranije tako bilo?) Ja, od starine. — Da, i prije, da. (Ali prije nije moglo da se ide, peške se išlo, kako se išlo?) Prije, a sad, eto malo. — Eto, sad ide. (A vi kad ste bili dete, jeste išli?) Ja sam igrala. — Da, i ja sam igrala, e da sam ovde mrtva igrala, kam pusta sreća.

[Poor thing, but she earns a lot of money. People give her money, jewelry, scarves, clothes, something to eat, a bit of everything. [...] (And when the Lazaricas go round, they go to every house? To every house?) To every house she goes. She dances in each house, wherever she comes. — They go to *Priboi*, they go to *Tobut*, they go to *L’ipoviț*. They go to *Iablañiță*. (How do they go, by car?) By bus. — They go, they go by bus. — By car, someone takes a car, they sit, so. — Yes, she and her father and her mother. That’s it. (And they do this every day? Saturday, Sunday?) Yes, yes. She goes every day. Goes every day. She gets a lot of money. (This was the same in the past?) Yes, since olden times. — Yes, even then, yes. (But long ago you couldn’t go, people used to go on foot, how did they go?) Then, but now, it is so. — You see, she goes. (And you, when you were a child, did you go?) I danced. — Yes, I danced too, eh, and if I could only dance dead here, wouldn’t that be great]

It is evident that the “Lazarica” custom, with its emphasis on the quantity of money the Lazarica-girl usually gets, means one thing for the

Karavlahs and another for the local Christian Orthodox. This may also be the reason for the extended duration of the custom to 5 weeks instead of only a day.

In the Karavlach settlement of Slatina, near Banja Luka:

The spring custom called Lazarica in the Slatina region coincides with the time of the settling of Karavlahs in the village of Slatina. They brought this custom with them and started practising it immediately. The autochthonous people in the villages of this region accepted the Lazarica custom as their own (Popović 2002: 125–126).

Tihomir Djordjević (1907: 380), points out that the Karavlahs of Slatina are “settlers from Serbia”. Another local monograph of the region north of Banjaluka mentions that the Karavlahs from the village of Sitneš practised the “Lazarica” custom for decades in all the villages of the region, and that “this way of earning money” was maintained until 1970 (Košutić 1995: 27–28).⁶

According to map II–1–15 in a comprehensive study by Plotnikova 2004 (“Ethnolinguistic Geography of South Slavia”) the “Lazarica” custom in Bosnia is attested in four settlements, and each time described as a “ritual performed by Gypsy women”.⁷ Similar ethnolinguistic conclusions on the relatively recent introduction of the “Lazarica” custom to Bosnia are evident from other studies aimed at reconstructing cultural isoglosses of Balkan spring rituals ‘against snakes’ (Plotnikova 2006, Sikimić 2001). From our fieldwork in Bosnia, from Karavlahs currently living in Serbia and some recent local or regional monographs, new nodes may be entered on this map for northwest Bosnia, while following Plotnikova’s idea that the “Lazarica” custom is practised only by Karavlach girls (cf. Kajmaković 1974: 96, village of Sitnež, Košutić 1995: 95–96).

6. Concluding remarks

To describe the current situation and reconstruct the genesis of the speech and traditional culture of diffuse speech communities such as the Bayash/Karavlach in the fragmented Balkans remains a complex task for

⁶ On Bayash and Roma girls practicing “Lazarica” custom in Serbia cf. Ilić 2005, Golemović 2002.

⁷ The settlements are: point 37 Vučjak (Filipović 1969a: 80) “ritual procession of Gypsy women”; point 38 Bosnian Posavina (Serbs), Filipović 1969a: 140, “ritual procession of Gypsy women”; point 39, Majeveca, Serbs, Filipović 1969a: 183, “ritual procession of Gypsy women”; point 40 Spreča near Zvornik (Serbs) Filipović 1969a: 30, “ritual procession of Gypsy women”.

Balkan linguists. It stands in direct correlation to the reconstruction of voluntary and involuntary displacements of the Bosnian Karavlahs in the 20th century, some of them across the ocean to North and South America, internal migrations (Sikimić 2006 has already described the linguistic situation of Bosnian Karavlah secondary settlements in Serbia — Priboj and Koceljeva), seasonal worker migration to Western Europe beginning in the early 1960s, and finally displacement due to the civil wars of the 1990s.

The compendious analysis of data from fieldwork among Romanian-speaking communities outside Romania in the Balkans enabled the introduction of the concept of ‘mental continuity’, aimed at defining Bayash group endogamy and their distant group awareness, all influencing the exogamy of small settlements. Research in the field followed the logic of ‘private’ chaining of separate settlements, the logic of mental continuity in the Bayash community in Serbia today that exists regardless of the individual physical distance dividing their members. This mental continuity, in the light of the new borders now being drawn in the Balkans and of massive movement by entire Bayash settlements to the countries of Western Europe, is seen as trans-border (Sikimić 2005, 2005a, 2006c, cf. also, from the sociological point of view, recent studies by Dorondel 2007, Şerban 2007). Knowledge of one’s fellow countrymen is shown through recognition and knowledge of members of the same small ethnic group, even those working temporarily in foreign countries. Nowadays marriages between members of settlements hundreds of kilometres from each other are very common, some of them living in different countries, including Romania, after the collapse of Yugoslavia. In reconstructing the possible Karavlah roads to Bosnia and the annual roads of semi-nomadism, one more thing should be observed: active exogamy in quite small communities could support various lexical, phonetic or even morphological innovations without the moving of the community as a whole.

While very much aware that the ethnographic truth surrounding the Karavlah may become a matter of dispute and that the results of field research may be misused, or seen at the present juncture as just another cleaving of the Roma ethnos, the author remains convinced that each transcript of a true conversation is a great contribution, a ‘research obligation’ in the ethical sense. Any further analysis and interpretation will reflect the current degree of knowledge and awareness of both scholars and the public. Today, the articulation of language rights is a significant issue in sociolinguistics. Language policy and planning are developing in three different but closely related academic directions: the language ecology movement, the linguistic human rights movement and minority lan-

guage rights in national and international law. The exercise of a language right in a real life context is connected to its implications for wider social and political stability, the disjuncture between legal arguments in favour of minority language rights and the actual language policies of many nation states, and the disjuncture between claims for macro-language rights and micro-language practices. May 2005: 320 points out that:

the micro-language claims necessarily require the codification and homogenisation of language groups and related languages and thus ignore the often far more complex, fluid, and at times contradictory, micro-language practices of individuals from within those groups.

The lack of academic (not only linguistic) interest in the Karavlach is just a reflection of the lack of interest on the part of the parent country (if this parent country is also parent to its official language), local minority organisations, both Romani and Romanian language scholars, and Romanists in general. This may be due to personal prejudice or to the real complexity of the task, primarily for linguists who need to be proficient not only in South Slavic and other Balkan and/or Hungarian languages and Romanian dialects, but also to be thoroughly grounded in Roma Studies.

The Bayash/Karavlach roads traversing the Balkans are far from being reconstructed; there is a serious lack of historiographical research that might shed new light. Purly linguistic data and classical dialectological and sociolinguistic research are insufficient for the study of nomadic and seminomadic peoples. Thanks to recent fieldwork among the Rudari of Bulgaria by Asenova/Aleksova (in this volume) and Bayash guest-workers in Germany (Leschber, this volume) we can hope that this challenging task will be finally achieved.

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