

Central Slovak and Kajkavian Structural Convergences: A Tentative Survey

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Abstract

The purpose of this tentative survey is to shed light on certain structural features that are common to the central Slovak and the Croatian kajkavian dialects. Some of these elements may be parallel developments, but there is a number of features that inevitably testify to the former existence of a continuum in the area that became largely de-Slavicized after the arrival of the Magyars, on the one hand, and the Bavarian Germans, on the other. It should be emphasized that this survey is preliminary, based on fieldwork carried out by the author, and that the features described below may also occur elsewhere. I tentatively designate the identified common isoglosses as “Pannonian.”

1. Introductory remarks

There is no doubt that the territory between the modern South and West Slavic languages was settled predominantly by the Slavs up until the ninth century, i.e. prior to the arrival in the area of the Magyars and the Bavarian Germans. Accordingly, there have been numerous attempts to classify the previous Slavic speech of the Carpathian basin into the West or the South Slavic speech areas. However, although such a strict division may appear operational in later periods, it was less clearly strict in the ninth century. Thus, the only way to approach the question is to identify potential isoglosses that were typical of the then continuous Slavic speech area in Pannonia. It should be noted that I use the notion of Pannonia (originally a Roman province) somewhat loosely, indicating the sub-Carpathian region for geographical reasons. This area has, namely, great potential to be a relatively homogeneous dialect area, since there are no sharp geographical borders that would have hampered contacts within it. I will accordingly label the reconstructed features as Pannonian.

It is evident that a sort of Proto-Slavic was still spoken in the entire Slavic speech area up to the seventh century (Holzer 1995). But in view of the fact that the Slavic speech area soon became relatively extensive, there most probably were at least numerous phonetic differences between diverse expansion dialects, on the one hand, and between the expansion dialects and the center (most apparently in the Carpathian

area), on the other. Instead of maintaining the operational principle of dividing the speech area according to a selection of features that occur in a particular Slavic macro area today (west, south or east), I shall focus on isoglosses that are common to certain South Slavic dialects and Central Slovak. This study is part of a more extensive research project dealing with sound change in disintegrating Common Slavic.

The position of Central Slovak as a dialect complex that exhibits major deviations from what is generally thought of as West Slavic is generally acknowledged, and the conclusion appears in the majority of cases to be that Central Slovak was primarily a South Slavic idiom with a considerable number of West Slavic features. It should be noted that the South Slavic basis of Central Slovak has basically been identified by comparing certain elements with štokavian and the standard languages based upon it (e.g., Popović 1960: *passim*). There have also been considerations as to whether Bulgarian has been spoken in the territory of what is now southern Slovakia (Stanislav 1944).¹

Hardly any considerable research has been conducted on the Slovak–kajkavian relationship, and one can but speculate as to the reasons for this. It is possible that scholars dealing with Slovak dialectology and historical grammar have been less aware of features encountered in the kajkavian territory. It is equally probable that the “kajkavologists” are not fully informed about the linguistic peculiarities within the Slovak speech area, or have failed to note certain (albeit relatively numerous) traits that display either a clear or “hidden” relationship of kajkavian to Slovak and its central dialects in particular. This state of affairs is odd, since a look at the map and the provision that kajkavian traits were spoken earlier in a larger part of Slavonia (the Podravina and Posavina regions, see Lončarić 1996:149ff.), i.e. in a part of the Carpathian basin, would rather suggest that kajkavian displays more common elements with Slovak than štokavian or Slovene. Insofar as štokavian elements are encountered in Central Slovak, they also exist in kajkavian and partially also in Slovene.² This does not apply the other way around: there are elements whose occurrence is limited exclusively to kajkavian and Central Slovak.

In this preliminary report, I shall account for and analyze a selection of isoglosses that are common to kajkavian and Central Slovak. Certain traits are not limited to Central Slovak and kajkavian only, and certain elements are not encountered in the entire kajkavian dialect area or in all the central Slovak dialects. The sample of kajkavian instances is predominantly based on my observations from fieldwork in the central Zagorje region, whereas the information about Central Slovak is based on scholarly studies available to me. It should also be noted that I, in the majority of cases, refer to central Slovak dialects as Slovak, because Standard Slovak is fairly

¹ The former existence of Bulgarian in what is now Hungary has also been ascertained with the help of toponymy. This is, however, not very convincing – above all due to the geographical distribution of isoglosses, but also (to a lesser degree) the dating of sound change in the southernmost early Slavic dialects. Thus, also the Bulgarian appearance of the most representative example *Pest* could be questioned. It is traditionally connected to the Bulgarian reflex of Proto-Slavic **kti* > *št* (**pekti* > Bulgarian *neuy* ‘oven’), see Stanislav 1944 on his critical attitude toward the presence of Bulgarian on the Slovak soil.

² In some Slovene dialects, West Slavic features such as *dl* (< **dl*) and the prefix *vi-* (**vy-*) are encountered. They do not exist in the entire Slovene speech area or in any of the kajkavian dialects. Most probably, there were certain differences between the Slavic speech of Noricum (present-day eastern Austria) and Pannonia.

faithfully based on central dialects (in deviating cases I deliberately add the attribute central).

Apart from toponymy and loanwords, Central Slovak (or, in some cases, sub-Carpathian and sub-Sudetic West Slavic) and kajkavian structural convergences are encountered at phonological (phonotactic), morphological and syntactic levels. In the following sections, I will present some of them and provide a short analysis of their distribution across the Slavic speech area.³ In the majority of cases it is difficult to say whether the similarities reflect common or later parallel developments. In the following description, I do not account for such convergences that have most probably emerged after the ninth century, i.e. after the break-up of the Slavic speech continuum in Pannonia.

For the sake of transparency, I shall predominantly make use of the traditional denotation of Proto-Slavic sound system – however unsuitable it may be.

2. “Pannonian” traits

There are certain well-known old convergences between South Slavic and Slovak. In general, all of these convergences are not limited exclusively to Slovak within the West Slavic speech area, and there are numerous other West and South Slavic convergences as well. The best-known and most visible “South Slavic” features in Slovak are the reflex of the circumflexed **orǐ-* and **ol̃t-* > *rat-*, *lat-*, **tl*, **dl* > *l*, the result of the Second Palatalization of *ch* > *s*, **jǐ* > *i*, a secondary vowel in *nesol*, *viezol* etc., the shortening of acute in long vowels (*blato*, *vrana*) and a number of other instances (see Popović 1960:36-39). Popović’s (1960:39) conclusion is straightforward: “...das Mittelslk muß einfach als ein südsl. Idiom bezeichnet werden.”

In the following sections, I will list certain phenomena which, for various reasons have received less scholarly attention.

2.1. The reflex of the Proto-Slavic front nasal vowel **ę* is a broad vowel *ę* in at least the central Zagorje kajkavian. The denotation corresponds to the tradition in Croatian linguistics.⁴ The phenomenon is encountered to a limited extent also in čakavian, resulting as *a* (Moguš 1977:35-36). This is a relatively widespread phenomenon, and a broad vowel is encountered in Slovak, Czech and north and east of the Carpathian mountains, but also in the far south. It is, thus, almost certain that the front nasal vowel in Pannonian Slavic was a broad rather than central vowel. Ample evidence is available from the kajkavian dialect area: *svęti* Pz, *ramę* Zč, *pędeset* GSt, *ramęna* (pl) GSt but also *rame* GSt. The vacillation in favor of a central *e* in kajkavian is apparently a reflection of the state of affairs in Standard Croatian.

³ In the examples from the kajkavian speech area, no accents have been given. The work on litteration is still ongoing. The accent may be of great interest for the study, but it is for the time being too early to draw any conclusions on parallel developments of accentuation in Slovak and kajkavian except for the well-known and more widespread Slovak and South Slavic convergences, such as the shortening of acute in long vowels etc.

⁴ The vowel in question could also be designated as *ä*, but since there is no opposition between palatalized and non-palatalized vowels in kajkavian, which could have some effect on sound change (contrary to Polish, Russian and Belarusian), I prefer to maintain here the Croatian dialectological tradition.

2.2. The reflex of the Proto-Slavic short vowels **ĩ* and **ũ* is a central *e* in kajkavian (insofar as a schwa is not available). This is also the case in Czech, Polish and western and eastern Slovak dialects. The threefold reflexes of **ĩ* and **ũ* (*e*, *o*, *a*) in Central Slovak still lack a reliable explanation. We can, however, conclude that these Proto-Slavic vowels had certainly merged in the Pannonian Slavic speech area and that any further developments should be considered later. Thus, we have a central *e* in kajkavian (for example *denes* Pz, *pes* Pz).

2.3. The Proto-Slavic long **ē* (trad. *ě*) was most probably a narrow vowel in Pannonian Slavic. It might have been diphthongized early – at least when still long, cf. kajkavian *biĵeli*, *diĵete* Pz, *viĵenci* Pz, *popiĵevali* Zl (sic! secondary lengthening of the shortened *jat*). Apparently, the variant with **-e/*-ę* in the stem **sed-/*sęd-* ‘to sit’ was, contrary to štokavian (with a generalized iterative with **-ě*), present in kajkavian, since one hears here a broad *-ę*.

2.4. The contraction of nom./acc.sg.n.adj. results as *-e* in kajkavian. Kajkavian, thus, shares this development with Standard Czech, Standard Slovak and Polish but not with Central Slovak, in which the result is *-uo*. However, the gen.sg.m./n.adj./pron. ending in Slovak, Czech, Polish and Slovene is *-ého/-ego/-ega* or the like, whereas in kajkavian it appears to be *-og*. The kajkavian ending *-e* is not an analogy to soft neuter nom.sg. endings, but the common kajkavian nom.sg. noun endings in *mliēke*, *sęle* are probably analogous to the contracted adjective endings. Should the hard stem neuter nouns be primary, the nom.sg. desinence would rather be a broad *-ę*. It should further be noted that kajkavian basically only possesses long adjectives. The contraction in Slavic displays very diverse patterns (see, e.g., Marvan 1979) and it is impossible to draw any decisive conclusions on the basis of our material with respect to Pannonian Slavic.

2.5. The diphthongization of long *ō* > *uo* is common to certain central Zagorje and central Slovak dialects. It should be noted that this does not apply to contracted adjective endings in kajkavian (see above). Clearly, the kajkavian development is of later date, since it appears to have taken place after the fall of the weak **ĩ* and **ũ*: *puotek* Zl, *puotok* GSt, *kuoža* GSt but *koža* Pz, *nuos* Zč, *kuost* Zč.

2.6. The absence of the epenthetic *l'* might be a converging development in kajkavian and West Slavic. Popović (1960:41-42) ascribes the existence of the epenthetic *l'* to Pannonian Slavic, but this phenomenon is far too complex in Slavic to enable such a conclusion.

2.7. In kajkavian and in some Slavonian štokavian dialects, *l* is pronounced soft (sometimes merging with the original *l* < **lj*) in front of *i* (*mol'im*, *bol'i* Pz). This phenomenon, although also typical of Slovak, may well be secondary in both Slovak

and kajkavian, since in kajkavian *d* and *t* are not affected as they are in Czech and Slovak (and even to a greater extent in Polish).

2.8. The inst.sg. of *a* stems is *-u* (or *-o*) in some central Zagorje dialects: *s kravu/kravo*, *s tou kravu* GSt, *s kravo* Pz, *s tou sęstru* GSt. This phenomenon is normally viewed as typical of West Slavic and Slovene. It is fairly certain that the Pannonian desinence was **-o* and not **-ojō*.

2.9. The instr.sg.m. desinence *-em* (< **ŭ*) occurs in kajkavian and is generalized in West Slavic: *z betonem* Pz. It is, to be sure, not entirely impossible that the desinence *-em* in kajkavian is an analogy to soft stem declination (*mužem* Pz). Thus, this trait is rather inconclusive.

2.10. The government of the numerals 1-4 does not follow the dual paradigm in kajkavian. It does not do this in Slovak, either. In kajkavian, the numeral is occasionally declined in oblique cases: *z dva voli*, *s tremā voli*, *dva kl'uči* Pz, *dva brati* Zl. As the dual paradigm was most probably alive in the ninth century (in the case of the numeral 2), the developments should rather be considered parallel, but not common. In central Zagorje, some traits point to a later existence of the dual, such as the pronoun *midva* 'we two' (similar to Slovene, which has maintained the dual). In štokavian, the corresponding pronoun has been replaced with the collective *nas dvojica* / *nas dvije* / *nas dvoje*. I have not registered the Slovene-type *obadva* 'we both' in kajkavian.

2.11. In kajkavian only long adjectives are common – similar to the case in West Slavic. Short forms still exist, according to secondary information, but it is possible that they have their origin in Standard Croatian.⁵ Short forms exist in Slovene, and I would be inclined to consider their decline a rather early phenomenon because of the results of the contraction of long vowels (see Section 2.4 above). In both Slovene and štokavian, one expects the use of a short adjective predicative in cases such as *(je)si dobar/dober?*, whereas in kajkavian one hears the long form only: *si dobri?*

2.12. The 1.pl.pres. ending in central kajkavian is *-mę*. This ending is apparently primary because of its broad *-ę* (and not central *-e*). Examples: *vęlímę*, *klęčímę* Pz. In many locations, the primary ending *-mę* has begun to be replaced with the štokavian *-mo*. Thus, for example *mętnemo*, *denemo/deneme* GSt. This ending was very susceptible to fluctuation in the entire Slavic speech area, and the fluctuation in kajkavian may depend, at least to a certain extent, on the phonotactic environment. Thus, the original ending *-mę* appears more frequently in verbs with a front vowel stem, whereas *-mo* is common in stems with a back vowel (*molimo* Pz). The ending

⁵ Kazimir Sviben († 2008, p.c.) reported that short adjective forms are encountered in Zlatar. However, long adjective forms appear to be the only ones I have been able to confirm.

-me with a central *e* should only be viewed as a result of the neutralization of the opposition $\epsilon : e$ due to the influence of Standard Croatian.

2.13. The generalization of the athematic desinence *-m* in the 1.sg.pres. also covers the verb *moći* in kajkavian (being also typical of the Zagreb koiné and Slovene): *morem, ne mrem*. This is also the case in Slovak (*môžem*) but not, for example in Czech (*mohu*) or štokavian (*mogu*). However, it is entirely uncertain whether this phenomenon is old enough to qualify as a Pannonian property. Much depends on how one dates the change $\text{že} > \text{re}$, which is very widespread (Slovene, kajkavian, čakavian and a part of štokavian).

2.14. The syntax of the negative past tense is interesting. In štokavian, čakavian and Slovene, the construction of the type *ja nisam čuo, jaz nisem slišel* and the like is the only possibility. This is almost exclusively the case also in kajkavian today, but occasionally the construction *ja sem ne čul* Zl, *ja sem se ne oprala* Pz, Bc, *ja sem ničul* Zl, *baš su ne bila zločesta* Pz may be heard, and the memory of its previous existence among older informants is still alive. One has to remember that the generalization of one past tense (and possibly pluperfect) is hard to date, and the imperfect and aorist could have still been alive in Pannonian Slavic. However, this construction is typical of Czech and Slovak, and together with the above (Section 2.12) described present tense ending *-mę*, the kajkavian state of affairs may well reflect the Pannonian Slavic verbal system. Common to certain kajkavian dialects and Central Slovak is also the lengthening of the negative particle *ne*: *ja sem ničul* Zl. It should be noted that the reflex of shortened *jat* in Zlatar is normally *e*, but in certain instances it appears as *je* (*popjevali*).

2.15. The future with the auxiliary *byti + l* participle is a common Slovene and kajkavian phenomenon which, to a limited extent, also occurs in štokavian. In West Slavic, the future is formed with *byti + infinitive*.

2.16. The enclitic dative reflexive *si* is common in kajkavian and West Slavic, but it also occurs in Slovene and elsewhere: *si seš, si sešla* Pz, Zl, GSt. The phenomenon is fairly common in the Zagreb koiné as well (*kupi si auto*).

2.17. The diminutive suffix *-ek* (< **ŭkŭ*) is extremely common and productive in kajkavian. Almost any masculine noun can take this suffix. Its counterpart is far less common in štokavian (*-ak*). In West Slavic, the same is true, but it is highly interesting that *-ek* is also a common diminutive suffix in Hungarian (Papp 1968:32-33). None of my sources can tell whether the Hungarian equivalent is of Finno-Ugric provenance.

2.18. The kajkavian relative pronoun *kateri/teri* (also declined) is used as the neutral relative pronoun 'which, that' as in West Slavic (Czech *který*, Slovak *ktorý*, Polish *który*), whereas the system in Slovene is diverse. Slovene has also generalized *ki* in

relative clauses, and in the oblique cases it is not declined (*vidim človeka, ki ga poznam / vidim ženo, ki jo poznam*). In at least northern (Istrian) čakavian the relative pronoun is *ki*, but it is declined (*kega* or the like). It is not entirely improbable that Slovene has lost the declension due to German dialects in which, for example, *wo* instead of *der/die/das* or *welcher/welche/welches* is common. The probability of this assumption is weakened by the fact that a construction (similar to Slovene) with an undeclinable *što* (*vidim čovjeka što ga poznajem, vidim ženu što je poznajem*) also occurs in štokavian.

3. Concluding remarks

The first conclusion that can be inferred from the above observations is that the division into West and South Slavic does not apply to Pannonia. Insofar as I still use these notions they should be conceived as of operational tools.

I am aware of the fact that my study of kajkavian is far from exhaustive and that a further study of northern kajkavian dialects, in particular, is necessary to illuminate the entire extent of transitional elements. I hope, in the near future, to be able to present a more concise analysis that would also take into account toponymy, loanwords and the Cyrillo-Methodian text material.⁶

However, the above survey is sufficient to offer certain evidence on the southern Carpathian and Sudetian Late Common Slavic structure which differed from, on the one hand, the northern Slavic dialectal area, and the southernmost area, on the other hand. These three historical macro zones, which notably do not follow the customary trichotomy (east, south, west), could also be designated as one central and two peripheral zones, whose existence points to early differences in disintegrating Slavic. However, this division appears to be less sharp at the early stage of disintegrating Common Slavic, and the earliest variation was rather phonetic without a subsequent actualization of sound change. Thus, this early variation was either phonologized or neutralized under certain circumstances, depending on the area. As to the actualization of sound change, the primarily phonetic variation appears to have affected the central area to a lesser extent than the northern and the southern area.

It should also be emphasized that Standard Croatian has had an enormous influence on the kajkavian dialects. This means that if “Pannonianisms” have started to disappear yet they still exist at least in the memory of informants, they should be viewed as primary. It is namely out of the question that such elements could have penetrated the kajkavian structure from Slovak in later periods.

The early central Slavic dialect area appears to have possessed a qualitative opposition between the short and the long *e*. The short *e* was broad (*ɛ*), at least in the area which later became known as kajkavian. This is supported by the fact that any secondary *e* is rather central (average *e*). In view of the fact that a broad *ɛ* (*ǣ*) was typical of the northern area as well (north of the Carpathian range) and is attested as such also in the earliest Slavic loanwords in Finnic (see Kiparsky 1963), it could be postulated also for the southern Carpathian region (“Proto-Czech, Proto-Slovak,” one

⁶ The relatively new monograph by Richards (2003) does not appear to be able to shed any new light on the Pannonian Slavic dialects or early sound change in them (see the review of Laakso 2006).

could say). It is impossible to say how far south this phenomenon extended. It could well have ranged across the entire Slavic speech area without having phonological consequences everywhere. It should be additionally noted that the vowel \bar{a} in both Central Slovak and kajkavian also originates from $*\bar{e}$. In kajkavian it has totally merged with \bar{e} ($< *e$), but in Central Slovak these vowels are basically kept apart (this applies to Czech, too).

The long Proto-Slavic $*\bar{e}$ must have been central or narrow in the early central dialects. There is absolutely no doubt that it was broad (\bar{a}) in the northern Carpathian speech area, including the northern “Proto-Russian” dialects (evidence from Finnic), and in the far south (evidence from toponymy in Greece and Slavic loanwords in the non-Slavic Balkan languages, as well as the state of affairs in East Bulgarian).⁷ We should also posit a central e for eastern proto-štokavian (underlying the modern Serbian dialects in Serbia proper) with transitional dialects in western Šumadija with a “non-replaced *jat*” (Ivić 1985: map). In the southern Carpathian regions, including the dialects underlying modern kajkavian, western štokavian and čakavian as well as Slovene, the long $*\bar{e}$ was rather narrow, yielding narrow reflexes such as *ie* or *i*.⁸

Abbreviations of examined locations

Bc = Bukovec (Mače)
GSt = Gornja Stubica
Pz = Poznanovec
Zč = (Sveti Križ) Začretje
Zl = Zlatar

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⁷ See, for example, Vasmer 1941. One could add here the Glagolitic evidence (one grapheme for Proto-Slavic $*\bar{e}$ and $*\bar{a}$), see Nuorluoto 1994:92ff.

⁸ One could cautiously postulate a Slavic substrate for the Hungarian opposition $\acute{e} : e (= \varepsilon)$. It would maximally correspond to the assumed Pannonian Slavic case. In West Hungarian there is also a phonological opposition $e : \varepsilon$ which complicates the above assumption. I thank Johanna Laakso and Raimo Raag for their willingness to discuss the matter (see also Kenesei & Vago & Fenyvesi 1998:385).

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