

THE SLAVIC *LINGUA FRANCA*

(Linguistic Notes of an Archeologist Turned Historian)*

When it comes to writing history, archaeologists like to think they have a better claim to chronological accuracy than linguists. At least, they can rely on more exact, sometimes even independent dates (such as provided by dendrochronological analysis) for studying sequences of change. Linguists, on the other hand, cannot apparently answer any questions regarding homelands and migrations without reference to extra-linguistic data.¹ Until recently, the relations between the disciplines of archaeology and linguistics have been dominated by ideas about language affiliation that were developed without any concern for critical approaches to reconstructing history.² Kazimierz Godłowski, the Polish archaeologist whose work had the greatest influence on the current research on the early Slavs, notoriously refused to engage in any discussion of linguistic theories about the Slavic ethnogenesis and homeland. Tongue in cheek, he pretended he was not competent enough to leave the all-too-familiar territory of historiography and archaeology.³ Others have been less reluctant to delve into neighboring disciplines. The Russian archaeologist Valentin V. Sedov has repeatedly used various, and often contradictory, linguistic theories to prop his own arguments about the Slavic colonization of northwestern Russia. His dating of the Slavic settlement in that region to the sixth or seventh century is explicitly based on A.A. Zalizniak's

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1 H. Popowska-Taborska, 'The Slavs in the early Middle Ages from the viewpoint of contemporary linguistics,' in *Origins of Central Europe*, ed. P. Urbańczyk (Warsaw: Scientific Society of Polish Archaeologists, 1997), pp. 91–96, here p. 93. See also H. Popowska-Taborska, *Wczesne dzieje Słowian w świetle ich języka* [The early history of the Slavs in the light of their language] (Wrocław: Zakład narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991).

2 Roger Blench, 'General introduction,' in *Archaeology and Language I. Theoretical and Methodological Orientations*, ed. R. Blench and M. Spriggs (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 1.

3 K. Godłowski, 'Die Frage der slawischen Einwanderung ins östliche Mitteleuropa,' *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 28 (1979), 416–417, with Polish text in the collection of his studies published posthumously by Michał Parczewski under the title *Pierwotne siedziby słowian* [The first settlements of the Slavs] (Cracow: Instytut Archeologii Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2000), p. 171.

linguistic analysis of the birch-bark letters found in Novgorod, all of which post-date A.D. 1000, but were written in a language viewed as extremely archaic because of lacking a sound change called 'second palatalization.'⁴ To pay back the service, Sedov strove to offer a picture of the archaeological evidence that would neatly fit linguistic theories about dialect differentiation in northern Russia.⁵

By contrast, linguists have rarely employed the archaeological evidence for backing up their theories, although some have indeed used the lack of such evidence for refuting rival theories.⁶ They seem to be convinced that language, and not material culture, is the most important aspect of ethnicity and, as a consequence, it is linguists, and not archaeologists, who should have the last word on

4 V.V. Sedov, 'Drevnosti Severo-zapadnoi chasti Vostochnoi Evropy vo vtoroi polovine I tysiacheletia n.e.' [The antiquities of the northwestern region of Eastern Europe during the second half of the first millenium A.D.], in *Finny v Evrope. VI–XV veka. Pribaltiisko-finskii narody. istoriko-arkheologicheskie issledovaniia. I: Formirovanie pribaltiiskikh finnov, plemena Finlandii i Iugo-Vostochnoi Pribaltiki* [The Finns in Europe, sixth to fifteenth centuries. Archaeological-historical studies on the Baltic-Finnish people. 1: The formation of the Baltic Finns, the tribes of Finland and the southeastern Baltic coast], ed. A. N. Kirpichnikov and E.A. Riabinin (Moscow: Institut Arkheologii AN SSSR, 1990), pp. 26–35, here pp. 27–28; V.V. Sedov, *Slaviane. Istoriko-arkheologicheskoe issledovanie* [The Slavs. Historical and Archaeological Study] (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2002), p. 363. The second regressive palatalization is a linguistic innovation that may have originated in the south, perhaps in the Balkans, and gradually spread to the north. In fact, the effects of this change became apparent in northern Russia only after ca. 1200. See H.G. Lunt, 'The progressive palatalization of early Slavic: evidence from Novgorod,' *Folia linguistica historica* 10 (1989), pp. 35–59, here p. 57. For Zalizniak's ideas and theories, see his *Drevnenovgorodskii dialekt* [The Old Novgorodian dialect] (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 1995). For a brief overview of the current linguistic debates over the birch-bark letters, see S. Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus', ca. 950–1300* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 88–89.

5 V.V. Sedov, 'Dialektno-plemennaiia differentsiatsiia slavian v nachale srednevekov'ia po dannym arkheologii' [The dialect and tribal differentiation of the Slavs in the early Middle Ages on the basis of the archaeological data], in *Istoriia, kul'tura, etnografiia i fol'klor slavianskikh narodov. X Mezhdunarodnyi s'ezd slavistov, Sofiia, sentiabr' 1988 g. Doklady sovet'skoi delegatsii* [History, culture, ethnography and folklore of the Slavic peoples. Tenth International Congress of Slavists, Sofia, September, 1988: Papers of the Soviet delegation], ed. I.I. Kostiusenko (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), pp. 169–80. For a typical attempt to fit the archaeological evidence into linguistic theory, see also G.S. Lebedev, 'Arkheologo-lingvisticheskaia gipoteza slavianskogo etnogeneza' [The archaeological-linguistic hypothesis concerning the Slavic ethnogenesis], in *Slaviane. Etnogeneza i etnicheskaia istoriia (Mezhdistsiplinarnye issledovaniia)* [The Slavs. Etnogenesis and ethnic history. Interdisciplinary studies], eds A.S. Gerd and G.S. Lebedev (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1989), pp. 105–15. *Contra*: Z. Váňa, 'Poznámky k etnogenezi a diferenciaci Slovanů z hlediska poznatků archeologie a jazykovědy' [Remarks on the ethnogenesis and differentiation of the Slavs on the basis of archaeological and linguistic data], *Památky Archeologické* 70 (1980), pp. 225–37, here p. 233. See also I. Pejros, 'Are correlations between archaeological and linguistic reconstructions possible?' in *Archaeology and Language I. Theoretical and Methodological Orientations*, ed. R. Blench and M. Spriggs (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 149–57.

6 Most notably Jürgen Udolph, in his critique of Oleg Trubachev's ideas, 'Kamen die Slaven aus Pannonien?' in *Studia nad etnogenezą słowian i kultury Europy wczesnośredniowiecznej. Praca zbiorowa* [Studies on the ethnogenesis of Slavs and the cultures of medieval Europe. Selected studies], eds G. Labuda and S. Tabaczyński, I (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987), pp. 167–73.

the ethnogenesis of the Slavs. As depository of human experiences, languages could thus be used to identify various 'historical layers' in 'fossilized' sounds, words, or phrases.

LANGUAGE, *VOLKSGEIST* AND *LINGUA FRANCA*

Such attitudes have a long history. By the mid-eighteenth century, the idea that Poles, Czechs, Croats, Russians, and others derived from an originally single, very ancient people of Biblical origin was widely spread.⁷ This idea seems to have been based on the assumption that there was a single Slavic language with innumerable dialects, all closely related to one another.⁸ Late eighteenth-century attempts to create a 'pan-Slavic' language were encouraged by Herder's extraordinarily favorable view of the Slavs. Herder first spoke of Slavs as victims at the hands of German warriors ever since the times of Charlemagne. He prophesied that the wheel of history would inexorably turn and one day, the industrious, peaceful, and happy Slavs would awaken from their submission and torpor to reinvigorate the great area between the Adriatic and the Carpathian Mountains and between the Don and the Vltava rivers. More influential, however, was Herder's idea of *Volk*. After 1760, he viewed the *Volk* as an organic collective whole, which united diverse individuals through a common language, shared institutions, art, and literature. Among all, language was the strongest unifying and formative force.⁹

It is this emphasis on language that provided the first impetus for the development of Slavic studies. Franz Bopp classified Slavic languages as Indo-European in 1833.¹⁰ Herder's concept of *Volk*, as unalterably set in language dur-

7 See N. I. Tolstoi, 'Tema bibleiskogo proiskhozhdeniia slavian u slavianskikh khronistov XII-XVIII vv.' [The theme of the Biblical origin of the Slavs in Slavic chronicles of the twelfth to eighteenth century], *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seria IX. Filologiya* 2 (1995), pp. 5-12; A.I. Filiushkin, 'Predstavlenie o slavianskom etnogeneze u vostochno-evropeiskikh srednevekovykh avtorov' [The representation of the Slavic ethnogenesis by Western medieval authors], in *Etnogenez i etnokul'turnye kontakty slavian* [Ethnogenesis and ethno-cultural contacts of Slavs], ed. V.V. Sedov (Moscow: Institut Arkheologii RAN, 1997), pp. 315-24.

8 R.L. Lencek, 'The Enlightenment's interest in languages and the national revival of the South Slavs', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 10 (1983), pp. 111-34.

9 J.G. Herder, *Sämtliche Werke* (Hildesheim/New York: Olms/Weidmann, 1994), XVII, p. 58; XIV, pp. 277-80. For Herder's views on the Slavs, see L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 310-5; H. C. Meyer, *Drang nach Osten. Fortunes of a Slogan-concept in German-Slavic Relations, 1849-1990* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1996), p. 31. The idea that language is the unifying bond of society and serves as a distinctive mark separating one nation from another goes back to such seventeenth-century thinkers as Bacon, Locke, and Leibniz. Long before Herder, words have been thought of as living documents of a remote national past. See G.C. Gerhardt, 'The "génie des langues" and the rise of linguistic nationalism,' in *Von Rubens zum Dekonstruktivismus. Sprach-, literar- und Kunstwissenschaftliche Beiträge. Festschrift für Wolfgang Drost*, eds H. Kreuzer, K. Riha, and C.W. Thomsen (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993), pp. 26-41, here p. 37.

10 F. Bopp, *Vergleichende Grammatik des Sanskrit, Send, Armenischen, Griechischen, Lateinischen, Litauischen, Altslavischen, Gothischen und Deutschen* (Berlin: Ernest Dümmler, 1833).

ing its early 'root' period, turned language into a perfect instrument for exploring the prehistory of the Slavs. On the basis of Bopp's classification of Slavic languages, Pavel Joseph Šafařík (1795–1861) made the 'Slavic tribe' a part of the Indo-European family. To him, the antiquity of the Slavs went well beyond the time of their first mention in historical sources, for 'all modern nations must have had ancestors in the ancient world.'¹¹ Šafařík's emphasis on language was very influential. Tadeusz Wojciechowski (1839–1919) first applied the retrogressive approach to the study of the early Slavs, thus using the conditions of the present to infer about the situation in prehistory. He was also the first to propose the use of place names to write Slavic history.¹² Others further developed this approach. In a book significantly entitled *From the History of Slavic Migrations*, A.L. Pogodin advanced the idea of using place-, particularly river-, names, to find the prehistoric homeland of the Slavs. He put forward the influential suggestion that the appropriate *Urheimat* was in Podolia and in Volhynia, the two regions with the oldest river names of Slavic origin.¹³ A Polish botanist, J. Rostafiński, pushed the linguistic argument even further: the homeland of the Slavs must have been a region devoid of beech, larch, and yew, for which all Slavic languages have words of Germanic origin. Russian *liavor* (white maple) derives from the word that yielded German *Ahorn*, the Czech word for larch (*modřín*) from the old Germanic *madra*, meaning 'red,' while Germanic **theku*

11 P. J. Schafarik, *Slawische Alterthümer*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1844), p. 40. There is yet no comprehensive study of the extraordinary influence Šafařík's ideas had on the development of modern linguistic theories of Common Slavic. For the impact of his ideas on the rise and growth of Slavic archaeology, see J. Kudlaček, 'P. J. Šafařík a jeho koncepcia pôvodu Slovanov' [P. J. Šafařík and his ideas about the migration of the Slavs], *Historický časopis* 5 (1957), pp. 59–81; J. Eisner, 'Šafaříkovy Slované starožitnosti a náš archeologický výzkum' [Šafařík's *Slované starožitnosti* and our archaeological research], *Slavia* 30 (1961), pp. 169–178; M. Beranová, 'Šafařík a současná archeologie' [Šafařík and the current research in archaeology], *Slavia* 65 (1996), pp. 99–102. For the political impact of his ideas, see Z. Václav, 'The work of P. J. Šafařík as an instrument of national defense of Slavs in the 19th century,' in *I. Międzynarodowy kongres archeologii słowiańskiej. Warszawa 14–18 IX 1965*, [First International Congress of Slavic Archaeology, Warsaw 14–18 September 1965], ed. W. Hensel, VII (Wrocław, etc.: Ossolineum, 1972), pp. 17–25.

12 T. Wojciechowski, *Chrobacja. Rozbiór starożytności słowiańskich* [Chrobacja. A contribution to Slavic antiquities] (Krakow: Akademia Umiejętności, 1873). See also L. Szafran-Szadkowska, *Zagadnienie etnogenezy słowian w historiografii polskiej w okresie od średniowiecza do końca XIX stulecia* [The representation of the Slavic ethnogenesis in Polish historiography from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century] (Opole: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna im. Powstanców Śląskich, 1983), p. 115.

13 A.L. Pogodin, *Iz istorii slavianskikh peredvizhenii* [From the history of Slavic migrations] (St. Petersburg: A. P. Lopukhina, 1901), pp. 85–111. A more recent variant of these theories is Jürgen Udolph's attempt to locate the Slavic *Urheimat* on the basis of river-, lake-, and moor-names in Galicia. See J. Udolph, *Studien zu slavischen Gewässernamen und Gewässerbezeichnungen. Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Urheimat der Slaven* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1979), pp. 619–620; J. Udolph, 'Kritisches und Antikritisches zur Bedeutung slavischer Gewässernamen für die Ethnogenese der Slaven,' *Zeitschrift für slawische Philologie* 45 (1985), 33–57, here pp. 45–46. Udolph's source of inspiration, however, was not Pogodin, but H. Krahe, *Sprache und Vorzeit. Europäische Vorgeschichte nach dem Zeugnis der Sprache* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1954).

'thick' yielded *tisa* 'yew'.¹⁴ Rostafiński also noted that all Slavic languages had an old Slavic word for hornbeam. His conclusion was therefore that Proto-Slavic was a language spoken outside the range of the supposedly West European trees (beech, fir, white maple, larch, yew, etc.). The Slavic *Urheimat* must have been located instead within the hornbeam zone. On the basis of the modern distribution of all those species of trees, Rostafiński concluded that the homeland of the Slavs was no other than the marshes along the Pripet River, near the present-day Ukrainian-Belarus border. Both Pogodin and Rostafiński's arguments were couched in the theory of Indo-European studies, a growing field by that time, which attempted to reconstruct the original language (*Ursprache*) of the original people (*Urvolk*) in their homeland (*Urheimat*) using the method of linguistic paleontology founded by Adalbert Kuhn.¹⁵ The Romantic theory that made language a defining factor in the formation of a particular culture type and world view pervades not only Pogodin's and Rostafiński's theories, but also the entire scholarly discourse about Indo-European origins.¹⁶ The basic tenet of the migration and homeland theory was the idea that the *Urheimat* of a language family must have been located in the vicinity of that family's tree root. In other words, it was often assumed that the homeland coincided with the region in which that family now displayed the greatest genetic diversity.¹⁷

14 J. Rostafiński, *O pierwotnych siedzibach i gospodarstwie słowian w przedhistorycznych czasach* [On the first settlements and the economy of the Slavs during prehistory] (Cracow: Nakładem M. Arcta, 1908). For more recent versions of Rostafiński's 'beech argument,' see J. Kostrzewski, 'Über den gegenwärtigen Stand der Erforschung der Ethnogenese der Slaven in archäologischer Sicht,' in *Das heidnische und christliche Slaventum. Acta II Congressus internationalis historiae Slavicae Salisburgo-Ratisbonensis anno 1967 celebrati*, ed. F. Zagiba (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1969), pp. 11–25, here p. 11; Z. Gołab, *The Origins of the Slavs. A Linguist's View* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1992), pp. 273–280. It is important to note in this context that in certain dialects (Low Lusatian, as well as Russian and Ukrainian dialects), the word supposedly derived from the proto-Indo-European name for beech refers to the elder tree.

15 The beginnings of linguistic paleontology came to be associated with Rasmus Rask, but the foundation of that discipline was laid by Adalbert Kuhn, who first attempted to describe the culture of the Indo-Europeans in correlation with the lexicon of their proto-language. The basic concept of linguistic paleontology is the divergence and split into various subgroups from a common stock. See E.C. Polomé, 'Linguistic paleontology: migration theory, prehistory, and archaeology correlated with linguistic data,' in *Research Guide on Language Change*, ed. E.C. Polomé (Berlin/New York: Mouton/De Gruyter, 1990), pp. 137–159, here p. 137. For the model of linguistic paleontology explicitly applied to Slavic languages, see A. Erhart, 'U kolebký slovanských jazyků' [On the origin of the Slavic language], *Slavia* 54 (1985), pp. 337–345.

16 Rostafiński's 'beech argument' was fully embraced and promoted by Max Vasmer, who endorsed the idea of a Slavic *Urheimat* in the Pripet marshes. See M. Vasmer, 'Die Urheimat der Slaven,' in *Der ostdeutsche Volksboden. Aufsätze zu den Fragen des Ostens*, ed. W. Volz (Breslau: F. Hirt, 1926), pp. 118–143 and *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, I (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1953), p. 139. See also T. Lehr-Splawiński, 'Neueres zur Frage nach der Herkunft der Slaven,' *Welt der Slawen* 6 (1961), pp. 1–8, here p. 2; H. Birnbaum, 'Weitere Überlegungen zur Frage nach der Urheimat der Slaven,' *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie* 46 (1986), pp. 19–45, here pp. 19–20.

17 See L. Dryen, 'Language distribution and migration theory,' *Language* 32 (1956), pp. 611–626. For linguistic paleontology and Indo-European studies, see J. Mallory, 'A short

Much has changed in Slavic linguistics since the days of Pogodin and Rostafiński. Few scholars would now believe that language is a direct mirror of culture, and some have pushed skepticism to the point of regarding Common Slavic as a purely linguistic abstraction, a scholarly invention of Slavic linguistics.¹⁸ The linguistic paleontology model of analysis with its family trees, branches, and roots has been largely abandoned. It has become clear that languages are not necessarily correlated with ethnic identities and that 'associated languages,' while sensitive to the context in which ethnic groups exist, do not cause or create identity.¹⁹ Particularly fierce attacks have been directed against the idea of a Balto-Slavic intermediary phase in the development of Slavic from Proto-Indo-European, an idea first proposed by August Schleicher, who is also credited with the introduction of the biological 'family tree' approach to the description of the evolution of related languages.²⁰ It became apparent that some of the lexical parallels and syntactic agreements between, say, Old Prussian and Lithuanian, on one hand, and Polish and Bielorrussian, on the other, have much more to do with 'secondary convergence' and contiguity in historical times, than with a prehistoric Balto-Slavic ethno-linguistic community.²¹ On the other hand, it has been noted that the Indo-European onomastics of the eastern Balkan area of Dacian

(cont. from previous page) history of the Indo-European problem,' *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 1 (1973), pp. 21–65.

18 K. Steinke, 'Das Urslavische: Fiktion und/oder Realität?' *Zeitschrift für slawische Philologie* 57 (1998), 371–378. See also H. G. Lunt, 'Common Slavic, Proto-Slavic, Pan-Slavic: What Are We Talking About?' *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics* 41 (1997), 7–67. The fundamental opus for the reconstruction of Common Slavic remains H. Birnbaum, *Common Slavic. Progress and Problems in its Reconstruction* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1975).

19 J. Untermann, 'Ursprache und historische Realität. Der Beitrag der Indogermanistik zu Fragen der Ethnogenesen,' in *Studien zur Ethnogenese* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1985), pp. 133–164, here p. 154. For 'associated languages,' see also C.M. Eastman and T.C. Reese, 'Associated language: how language and ethnic identity are related,' *General Linguistics* 21 (1981), 109–116, here p. 115.

20 For an overview of Schleicher's ideas and the subsequent criticism, especially by Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, Antoine Meillet, and Ernst Fraenkel, see A. M. Schenker, *The Dawn of Slavic. An Introduction to Slavic Philology* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 70.

21 H. Birnbaum, 'The Slavonic Language Community As a Genetic and Typological Class,' *Welt der Slawen* 27 (1982), pp. 5–43, here pp. 12–13. Birnbaum suggested that the 'separation' of Slavic from Baltic may have been the result of the interference from either Iranian-speaking groups or, more likely, from the Avars, an impact which Baltic languages seem to have escaped. See H. Birnbaum, 'On the ethnogenesis and protohome of the Slavs: the linguistic evidence,' *Journal of Slavic Linguistics* 1 (1993), pp. 352–374, here p. 359. Christian Stang first proposed that certain shared characteristics in the morphology of the verb and of the noun linking Slavic to Baltic or Germanic languages may be the result of a *Sprachbund*-type phenomenon. See C. S. Stang, *Das slavische und baltische Verbum* (Oslo: J. Dybwad, 1942), p. 278. The idea that all Indo-European languages may have initially formed a *Sprachbund*, and that the linguistic concept of Proto-Indo-European in fact describes a pidgin, received its definite formulation in the work of Vittore Pisani, *Linguistica generale e indoeuropea* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1940), but goes back to the theories of Nikolai S. Trubetzkoy.

and Thracian have much in common with Baltic, but not with Slavic onomastics.²² Finally, we came to understand the family of Slavic languages not in terms of a branch of the Indo-European tree, but as a relative chronology of isoglosses.²³ Long regarded as a language without dialects, Common Slavic, to the extent that it is conceived as a historical language at all, now appears as a continuum of converging dialects. Indeed, it has long been noted that a uniform Slavic language community could not have been possibly maintained during the supposed migration of the Slavs, a phenomenon encompassing a vast area of Europe, but for which historians have reserved only a relatively short period of time.²⁴

Despite many such changes, searching for a region of Europe from which the linguistic ancestor of all modern Slavic languages originated remains a topic of utmost importance for linguists.²⁵ Some have by now accepted that no major migrations are required to explain the distribution of Indo-European languages at any stage in their history.²⁶ Yet the obsessive question of where particular languages originated is still a major concern for many linguists. In fact, abandoning the idea of a homeland from which Slavic *migrations* originated does not imply giving up on the search for the *Urheimat* of all Slavic *languages*. To be sure, the terminology changed, with 'locus' or 'epicenter' now replacing *Urheimat*. Recently, Johanna Nichols placed the locus for Slavic on the map "in the vicinity

22 O.N. Trubachev, 'Linguistics and ethnogenesis of the Slavs: the ancient Slavs as evidenced by etymology and onomastics,' *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 13 (1985), pp. 203–256, here p. 215. On the other hand, certain isoglosses, particularly lexical ones, in Balkan Slavic languages have cognates in Baltic, but not in East Slavic languages. See D. Brozović, 'Doseljenje slavena i njihovi dodiri sa starosjediočima u svjetlu lingvističkih istraživanja' [The settlement of the Slavs and their contacts with the native population in the light of linguistic studies], in *Simpozijum "Predslavenski etnički elementi na Balkanu u etnogenezi južnih Slovena"*, održan 24–26. oktobra 1968 u Mostaru [Symposium on Pre-Slavic ethnic elements on the Balkans and the ethnogenesis of Southern Slavs; Mostar, 24–26 October, 1968], ed. A. Benac (Sarajevo: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, 1969), pp. 129–140, here pp. 131–132.

23 See G. Holzer, 'Die Einheitlichkeit des Slavischen um 600 n. Chr. und ihr Zerfall,' *Wiener slavistisches Jahrbuch* 41 (1995), pp. 55–89, here pp. 55 and 56 with n. 2.

24 H.G. Lunt, 'On Common Slavic,' *Zbornik Matice sprske za filologiju i lingvistiku* 27–28 (1984–1985), pp. 417–422, here p. 421; Trubachev, 'Linguistics and ethnogenesis,' p. 208; Popowska-Taborska, 'The Slavs in the early Middle Ages,' p. 92. *Contra*: Z. Stieber, 'Le problème des plus anciennes différences entre les dialectes slaves,' in *I. Międzynarodowy kongres archeologii słowiańskiej*, pp. 98–112, here p. 108.

25 Most notably Gołab, *The Origins* and V.M. Mokienko, 'Gde zhili pervye slaviane' [Where did the earliest Slavs live?], in *Raznye grani edinoi nauki: uchenye – molodym slavistam* [Different angles of one science: Studies of young Slavists], ed. P.A. Dimitriev and G.I. Safronov (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo S. Peterburgskogo universiteta, 1996), pp. 40–57. For a critique of linguistically inspired attempts to write the history of the early Slavs, see F. Curta, *The Making of the Slavs. History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, ca. 500–700* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 6–14 and 345–346.

26 J. Nichols, 'The epicenter of the Indo-European linguistic spread,' in *Archaeology and Language I. Theoretical and Methodological Orientations*, eds R. Blench and M. Spriggs (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 122–148, here p. 136.

of the western Danube plain, which is the evident center of cultural influence from which the spread of Slavic speech emanated, and an early center of Slavic political power.”²⁷ According to Nichols “the Slavic spread seems to have been the spread of Slavic speech and ethnic identity, combined with Avar political and ideological institutions.”²⁸ Leaving aside the unwarranted assumption that Slavic language and ethnicity went hand in hand, both the choice of the Danube region for the ‘locus of Slavic’ and the hint at Avar political hegemony bring to mind two other recent developments in the linguistic research on Slavic origins. One is inextricably associated with the name of Oleg Trubachev and his idea that the Slavic homeland was in the (Middle) Danube region of present-day Hungary, not in the marshes along the Pripiet River in Belarus.²⁹ But since Trubachev’s main argument is that one of the earliest habitats of the Indo-Europeans was in the Danube region, the most important part of his thesis has little to do with Nichols’s arguments, which are concerned with more recent historical developments. Much more significant, in my opinion, is Horace G. Lunt’s idea that Common Slavic was used as a *lingua franca* within and outside the Avar qaganate. Building upon an earlier suggestion by Omeljan Pritsak, Lunt argues that only as a *lingua franca* could Slavic have spread throughout most of Eastern Europe, obliterating old dialects and languages, while at the same time remaining fairly stable and remarkably uniform through the ninth century.³⁰ According

27 J. Nichols, ‘The Eurasian spread zone and the Indo-European dispersal,’ in *Archaeology and Language II. Correlating Archaeological and Linguistic Hypotheses*, eds R. Blench and M. Spriggs (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 220–266, here p. 225. See also J. Nichols, ‘The linguistic geography of the Slavic expansion,’ in *American Contributions to the Eleventh International Congress of Slavists. Bratislava, August–September 1993. Literature, Linguistics, Poetics*, eds R.A. Maguire and A. Timberlake (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1993), pp. 377–391, here p. 386. While in 1993, the Danube plain was “the ultimate epicenter of the Slavic spread,” by 1998, “the locus [of Slavic] included both the Danube plain and the Middle Dnieper centers” (‘Eurasian spread zone,’ p. 225).

28 Nichols, ‘Eurasian spread zone,’ p. 241. See also her ‘Linguistic geography,’ p. 378: “the most parsimonious assumption is that the Slavic expansion was primarily a linguistic spread.” For Avar history, see W. Pohl, *Die Awaren. Ein Steppenvolk im Mitteleuropa 567–822 n. Chr.* (München: C.H. Beck, 1988) and S. Szádeczky-Kardoss, ‘The Avars,’ in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. D. Sinor (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 206–228. For Avar history and archaeology, see *Gli Avari. Un popolo d’Europa*, ed. G. C. Menis (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1995) and *Reitervölker aus dem Osten. Hunnen + Awaren. Burgenländische Landesausstellung 1996. Schloß Halbturn, 26. April–31. Oktober 1996*, eds F. Daim, K. Kaus, and P. Tomka (Eisenstadt: Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung, 1996).

29 O.N. Trubachev, ‘Iazykoznanie i etnogenez slavian. Drevnie slaviane po dannym etimologii i onomastiki’ [Linguistics and the ethnogenesis of the Slavs. The ancient Slavs on the basis of etymological and onomastical data], *Voprosy iazykoznaniiia* 4 (1982), pp. 10–26 and 5 (1982), pp. 3–17. See also O.N. Trubachev, *Etnogenez i kul’tura drevneishikh slavian. Lingvisticheskie issledovaniia* [The ethnogenesis and the culture of the earliest Slavs: Linguistic studies] (Moscow: Nauka, 1991). For one of his last statements on this issue, see ‘Vzgliad na problemu prarodiny slavian (paradoksy nauki i paradoksy zhizni)’ [Opinion on the problem of the Slavic homeland. Paradoxes of science and paradoxes of life], in *Kul’tura slavian i Rus’* [Culture of the Slavs and Rus’], eds Iu. S. Kukushkin, T.B. Kniazevskaia, and T.I. Makarova (Moscow: Nauka, 1998), pp. 53–62.

to Lunt, the success and mobility of the Slavic 'special border guards' of the Avar qaganate "spread a homogenized *lingua franca* into settled communities all over Eastern Europe."³¹ Thus, a broad spectrum of related dialects merged into a single system, which some linguists call Proto-Slavic, others Common Slavic. To be sure, there are several problems with Pritsak's and Lunt's hypothesis. First, both seem to have forced the historical evidence to fit the idea of Slavs (or Sclavenes) serving as 'special border guards' within the Avar qaganate.³² Moreover, the existing evidence contradicts the idea that a Sclavene (Slavic) ethnicity existed only in the context of Avar power. In fact, the early Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea, who knew nothing about Avars, had a lot to say about Slavs in terms of language, settlement, and religion, which suggests that a Slavic identity of sorts must have existed before the arrival of the Avars.

But, in my opinion, the idea of Slavic as a *lingua franca* within the Avar qaganate is worth further consideration. Indeed, for Lunt's hypothesis to be accepted one would need to know first whether any historical evidence exists for Avars speaking Slavic. Can a *lingua franca* be accepted as a historical probability at this point in time? Is it possible that the linguistic spread of Slavic, in Nichols's terms, is a matter of political expansion (or influence) of the Avar qaganate? Can the fragmentation of Common Slavic into dialects possibly be a consequence of the collapse of the Avar polity in the aftermath of Charlemagne's expeditions of 791–795?³³ More important, could the use of Slavic as a

30 Lunt, 'On Common Slavic,' pp. 421–422, citing O. Pritsak, 'The Slavs and the Avars,' *Gli Slavi occidentali e meridionali nell'alto Medioevo* (Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro, 1983), pp. 353–435, here pp. 423–4. See also H.G. Lunt, 'Slavs, Common Slavic, and Old Church Slavonic,' in *Litterae Slavicae Medii Aevi. Francisco Venceslao Mares Sexagenario Oblatae*, ed. J. Reinhart (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1985), pp. 185–204, here p. 203; and Lunt, 'Common Slavic, Proto-Slavic,' p. 36. Pritsak's concept of a Slavic *lingua franca* was inspired by the work of Jan Peisker. Like him, Pritsak regarded Sclavenes not as an ethnic group, but as amphibious units for guerilla warfare both on water and on land. See J. Peisker, 'Die älteren Beziehungen der Slawen zu Turkotaren und Germanen und ihre sozialgeschichtliche Bedeutung,' *Vierteljahresschrift zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 3 (1905), pp. 187–360.

31 Lunt, 'On Common Slavic,' p. 422. At several points, Lunt insists on the idea that a gradual expansion of the Slavs from an initially restricted area in Eastern Europe does not dovetail with the fact that the Common Slavic linguists reconstruct is a language without dialects, regardless of the specific dates assigned to its beginning and closure.

32 To be sure, in 592 the qagan of the Avars ordered the Sclavenes to build boats for his troops to cross the Danube river (Theophylact Simocatta VI 3.9–4.1), but this would hardly make them the "marines of the epoch" (Pritsak, 'The Slavs,' p. 411). On the other hand, the Avar army itself consisted of a considerable number of Sclavene warriors, as indicated by the great number of Sclavene prisoners captured by Priscus in 599 (Theophylact Simocatta VIII 3.14–15). Small Sclavene tribal units were developing on the western frontier of the qaganate and were used in confrontations with the western neighbors of the Avars, the Bavarians (Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV 28 and IV 7). Such units seem to have been clients of the qagan, but could hardly be considered "special border guards."

33 The standard interpretation maintains that after a Common (or Proto-) Slavic period whose end is marked by the introduction of phonemic pitched distinctions, during the succeeding period, linguistic developments were dialect-specific, leading up to the eventual disintegration of Common Slavic and the forming of the medieval Slavic languages. See Schenker, *The Dawn of Slavic*, p. 89.

lingua franca within the Avar qaganate contribute to an explanation of how Slavic languages came to be spoken *outside* the area under direct Avar control, namely in areas so far from the center of power in the Carpathian basin as Poland or northwestern Rus'?³⁴ Above all, this paper is an attempt to provide plausible answers to at least some of these questions. Without any claims to exhaustive coverage of all issues raised by the current linguistic research concerning Common Slavic, I suggest that Pritsak's and Lunt's model of analysis is better equipped for advancing our understanding of what happened in both political and linguistic terms between *ca.* 600 and *ca.* 800. At least, this, and no other, model so far proposed by linguists or linguistically trained historians has support in the existing historical evidence. At most, this approach promises to bring current linguistic studies of Common (or Proto-) Slavic back in line with historical research, after several decades of more or less complete isolation, or misguided attempts to reconstruct not just the language, but also the culture and history of the 'early Slavs.'

LINGUA FRANCA AND LANGUAGE CONTACTS

A good point of departure is defining what we mean by *lingua franca*. The phrase is normally reserved for a language used for communication between groups who do not speak each other's languages, as well as between native speakers of the *lingua franca* and other groups.³⁵ The exemplary *lingua franca* was a language derived from an Italian dialect used in communication along the trade routes established across the eastern Mediterranean in the aftermath of the Crusades. By contrast, pidgins (or creoles) are hybrid languages. For example, Michif, the language spoken by some Métis people of the Turtle Mountain

34 According to Georg Holzer, the historical evidence suggests that a Slavic *lingua franca* may have existed even before the arrival of the Avars, for Procopius maintains that the Sclavenes and the Antes spoke the same, "utterly barbarous language." See Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars* VII 14.26; Holzer, 'Die Einheitlichkeit,' p. 61. Others have found Slavs in the Danube region at an even earlier date. They argue that both *strava* (a word mentioned by Jordanes, *Getica* 49) and *medos* (a word that appears in Priscus of Panion, p. 39 Bornemann) document the presence of speakers of Slavic within Attila's Hunnic empire. See A.A. Gindin, 'K voprosu o khronologii nachalnikh etapov slavianskoi kolonizatsii Balkany (po lingvo-filologicheskikh dannym)' [On the chronology of the earliest phase of Slavic colonization in the Balkans on the basis of linguistic and philological data], *Linguistique balkanique* 36 (1983), pp. 17-39, here pp. 22-32; Askold Ivanchik, 'Le problème de l'apparition des Slaves sur les frontières de Byzance. Les témoignages des Priscus de Panion,' in *Radovi XIII. Međunarodnog Kongresa za starokršćansku arheologiju. Split-Poreč (25.9.-1.10. 1994)* [Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Congress of Palaeochristian Archaeology, Split-Porec, 25 September-1 October, 1994], eds N. Cambi and E. Marin, vol. 3 (Vatican/Split: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana/Arheološki Muzej, 1998), pp. 379-385, here p. 385. However, at least *medos* may well be a word from a language now dead that was also spoken during Attila's time. See Gottfried Schramm, *Ein Damm bricht. Die römische Donaugrenze und die Invasionen des 5.-7. Jahrhunderts im Lichte von Namen und Wörtern* (München: Oldenbourg, 1997), pp. 95-105.

35 Sarah G. Thomason, *Language Contact. An Introduction* (Washington, 2001), p. 158.

reservation in North Dakota, comprises French noun phrases combined with Cree verb phrases and sentence structure. At a quick glimpse, neither one of these two examples matches Lunt's concept of a Slavic *lingua franca*. Common Slavic could hardly be described as a combination of several different languages, and its spread could hardly be explained in terms of trade networks. If, indeed, Lunt is right (as I think he is) and Slavic was used as a *lingua franca* within the Avar qaganate, it must have been the result of specific historical circumstances. Several written sources mention the existence of various ethnic groups within the qaganate (Avars, Bulgars, Romans, but also Gepids), who presumably spoke different languages. Theoretically, the language of communication between all these groups could as well have been a pidgin, a hybrid language created 'from bottom up' by subjects of the qagan speaking different languages. That Slavic may have become a *lingua franca* within the qaganate surely pertains to a different social phenomenon. *Linguae francae* are usually created 'from top down' and, if so, the participation of the Avar elite in spreading the Slavic *lingua franca* must have been a key factor, an important point to which I shall return shortly.

Lunt and others have insistently pointed out that Common Slavic cannot be the result of the Slavic migration, for any migrations to wider territories would have resulted in language differentiation (different languages, not a common one).³⁶ But it is equally true that if Common Slavic was a *lingua franca* within the Avar qaganate, it became so in response to the problems associated with the contact between speakers of various, mutually unintelligible languages. To the extent that it formed in a contact situation, Common Slavic was thus a contact language. The existence of a *lingua franca* implies frequent code-switching between languages and "bilingualism was a systematic feature of the Slavic frontier."³⁷ Assuming that Slavic really was a *lingua franca*, bilingualism must have been particularly frequent among the elites of the qaganate. Elites in the early Middle Ages were (or were considered to be) multilingual as a matter of fact.³⁸

36 See, for example, Popowska-Taborska, 'The Slavs in the early Middle Ages,' p. 92. As Henrik Birnbaum rightly noted, the issue of language differentiation is directly associated with that of how old Slavic really is. According to Birnbaum, no Slavs (i.e., speakers of a Slavic language) existed before the Great Migration period. Henrik Birnbaum, 'Zur Problematik des Urslavischen,' in *Croatica, Slavica, Indoeuropaea*, ed. G. Holzer (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990), pp. 21–27, here p. 23.

37 Nichols, 'Linguistic geography,' p. 377. As Angus McIntosh pointed out, what is often meant by "languages in contact" is "users of languages in contact," which implies that any investigation of a language contact situation is by definition sociolinguistic in nature. See Angus McIntosh, 'Codes and cultures,' in *Speaking in Our Tongues. Proceedings of a Colloquium on Medieval Dialectology and Related Disciplines*, eds M. Laing and K. Williamson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 135–137. In particular, the issue of bilingualism raises the associated problem of whether specialist interpreters (translators) were used in bilingual situations. See Matthew Townend, *Language and History in Viking-Age England. Linguistic Relations between Speakers of Old Norse and Old English* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), p. 10. The modern study of "languages in contact" derives substantially from Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in Contact. Findings and Problems* (New York: Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953).

38 Townend, *Language and History*, p. 148. Sociolinguistic research suggests that code-switching in general is a most honored practice and that speakers use it with great pride. See Thomason, *Language Contact*, p. 54.

Bilingualism is attested also outside the qaganate, among 'native' Slavic elites. The member of the (presumably Slavic-speaking) Antian tribe impersonating Chilbudius, was able to claim successfully a false identity, that of a Roman general long dead, because he spoke fluently Latin (or Romance).³⁹

Much has been made of the Slavic influence on Romanian. But, if anything, the linguistic evidence contradicts the idea of a migration of the Slavs from their *Urheimat* in Galicia (West Ukraine) to the Balkans. Indeed, it has been noted that, if speakers of Slavic came from some territory to the northeast of what is today Romania, one would expect a strong influence of East Slavic upon Romanian.⁴⁰ This would be true even if 'East Slavic' may not have existed at the time of the supposed migration. Speakers of Slavic choosing to stay north of the Danube, instead of joining the emigrants leaving for the Balkans, would have remained in contact with the *Urheimat* and, as a consequence, their language would have been affected by changes most typical for the East Slavic dialects. This would in turn show up in Slavic loans and various other features of the Slavic influence on Romanian. But place- and river-names of Slavic origin in Romania overwhelmingly point to a southern, not eastern influence. Most Slavic loans in Romanian are of Balkan origin.⁴¹ Moreover, despite the presumed presence of Slavic-speaking communities in the Balkans at a relatively early date after the 'migration of the Slavs,' the influence of what linguists call Common Slavic on the non-Slavic languages of the area (Romanian, Albanian, and Greek) is minimal and far less significant than that of Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, and Macedonian.

If Common Slavic was a *lingua franca*, intense and prolonged contact with other languages, especially with non-Slavic languages in the Balkans, must have put a premium on the ability to switch from one language to another, even within the same sentence or situation. Indeed, this appears to be the most certain sign of effective bilingualism. Particularly important in this context are therefore strategies of second-language acquisition. Speakers shifting from one language (non-Slavic) to another (Slavic) may have maintaining patterns from the native languages in constructing their version of the learned language. The end result of such strategies may be best illustrated in Russian, which has a general genitive ('cena chaia,' the price of tea), as well as a partitive genitive case ('chashka chaiu,'

39 Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars* VII 14. 32–35. For 'phoney Chilbudios,' see G.G. Litavrin, 'O dvukh Khilbudiakh Prokopiia Kesariiskogo' [On the two Chilbudios of Procopius of Caesarea], *Vizantiiskii Vremennik* 47 (1986), pp. 24–30. Greek–Slavic bilingualism is equally attested. Perbundos, the seventh-century 'king' of the (Slavic) Rynchines in the hinterland of Thessalonica, had a thorough command of Greek (*Miracles of St Demetrius* II 4.231, 233–7, and 242).

40 See Witold Mańczak, 'Pourquoi la Dacie, au contraire des autres provinces danubiennes, n'a-t-elle pas été slavisée?' *Vox Romanica* 47 (1988), pp. 21–27. Of course, Mańczak's point is that the Slavs reached the Balkans from the northwest, which supposedly suggests that the Slavic *Urheimat* was in present-day Poland, not in Galicia or anywhere else.

41 For the date and nature of contact between South Slavic (Bulgarian) and Romanian, see now Elena Scărlătoiu, 'Rapports linguistiques bulgaro-roumains (IX^e–XI^e siècles),' *Revue des études sud-est-européennes* 27 (1989), pp. 171–184.

a cup of tea, meaning, literally, 'some/a part of tea'). The general genitive is the Common (or Proto-) Slavic genitive singular suffix for a class of masculine nouns, while the partitive genitive looks suspiciously like the regular genitive singular suffix of a different, much smaller class of masculine nouns. In fact, the existence of the partitive genitive case has been traced back to shifting Uralic speakers, who may have assumed that suffixes had different functions and thus concluded that the functions must match some from their own native languages. Original speakers of Russian later adopted this change when shifting speakers were integrated into the Russian-speaking community.⁴² Something very similar may be at the origin of the postpositive article in Bulgaro-Macedonian, which is traced back to the Common Slavic demonstrative pronoun 'that; he' (Old Church Slavonic *tw, ta, to*, with plural *ti, ty, ta*). In treating this article as enclitic, Bulgarian and certain Macedonian dialects are no different from their non-Slavic neighbors, Albanian and Romanian. As Wilfried Stölting has shown, the formation of the Bulgaro-Macedonian postpositive article must have been influenced by these two languages, despite the fact that the postpositive article also appears in North Russian dialects.⁴³ Shifting speakers may have reproduced in Bulgaro-Macedonian the structures familiar to them in either Albanian or Romanian. But the fact that instances of postpositive articles in Old Church Slavonic are rare suggests a relatively late date for this phenomenon, most likely after *ca.* 800.⁴⁴ The idea that the linguistic spread of Slavic in the Balkans may have been a matter of second-language acquisition is further substantiated by the contribution of Common Slavic to the territorial expansion of the phonemic unit of the nasal-*shwa* type which certainly existed in Balkan Latin before *ca.* 600 and is responsible for the emergence of /î/ in Romanian.⁴⁵ In this case, the shifting speakers may well have transposed onto Slavic a phonemic feature from Romance (or Balkan Latin). Indeed, several old loans in Old Church Slavonic are not from Romanian, but from Balkan Romance.⁴⁶ Others, such as Old Church Slavonic *loštika* 'lettuce' discussed in this volume by Georg Holzer, may indeed derive from Lombardian and, as such, be of a much later date and in connection with gardening practices introduced by

42 Example from Thomason, *Language Contact*, pp. 147–148. Uralic languages distinguish between general genitive and partitive genitive.

43 Wilfried Stölting, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Artikels im Bulgarischen* (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1970).

44 Vit Bubenik, *Morphological and Syntactic Change in Medieval Greek and South Slavic Languages* (Munich: Lincom Europa, 2001), p. 33. Bubenik suggests that an additional impulse to treat Common Slavic *tw, ta, to* as enclitic may have come from the agglutinative language of the Bulgars.

45 Irena Sawicka, 'A medieval phonetic balkanism,' *Folia linguistica historica* 21 (2000), pp. 155–158. Long considered to be a phonemic feature borrowed from Common Slavic, Romanian /î/ has proved to be a segment that developed internally. See Peter R. Petrucci, 'The historical development of the Rumanian /î/,' in *Contemporary Research in Romance Linguistics. Papers from the 22nd Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages El Paso/Cd. Juárez, February 1992*, eds J. Amastae, G. Goodall, M. Montalbetti, and M. Phinney (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995), pp. 167–176.

46 Ivan Duridanov, 'Die ältesten slawischen Entlehnungen im Rumänischen,' *Balkansko ezikoznanie* 34 (1991), pp. 3–19, here p. 9.

Benedictine houses established in Dalmatia.⁴⁷ Similarly, many Slavic loans in Romanian seem to be of a late, primarily literary origin (Church literature, charters, and popular literature).⁴⁸ Words long viewed as very early Common Slavic loans in Albanian and Greek,⁴⁹ such as *magulë*, *karrutë*, and *matukë*, with their Modern Greek cognates *magoula*, *karouta* and *matouka*, may not be Slavic after all. Albanian *magulë* has a cognate in Romanian, *măgură*, showing the change of intervocalic *l* to *r*, which presumably took place before contact with Slavic.⁵⁰ *Karouta*, meaning 'trough' derives from Latin *carruc(h)a* surviving in Romanian as *căruță*, meaning 'vehicle.'⁵¹

In fact, at a closer look, only a small number of loans in both Romanian and Albanian could be dated on phonemic grounds before the transformations marking the end of Common Slavic and the beginning of dialect differentiation (the

47 Demetrius Moutsos, 'Early Graeco-Slavic contacts and the problem of mutual interference,' *Zeitschrift für Balkanologie* 23 (1987), pp. 36–66, here p. 58 (citing Petar Skok). For Benedictine monasteries in Dalmatia, see Ivan Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj* [The Benedictines in Croatia] (Split: Benediktinski priorat Tkon, 1963); I. Bagarić, 'Die Rolle der Benediktiner in der kroatischen Geschichte,' *Mariastein* 28 (1982), pp. 62–68. Slavic-Lombard bilingualism is also attested in written sources (see Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV 28).

48 Grigore Nandriș, 'The earliest contacts between Slavs and Roumanians,' *Slavonic and East European Review* 18 (1939), pp. 142–154. Very few words of a very long list of Slavic loans in Romanian can be dated earlier than the ninth century. See Ioan Bărbulescu, *Individualitatea limbii române și elementele slave vechi* [The Individuality of the Romanian Language and the Old Slavic Elements] (Bucharest: Editura Casei Școalelor, 1929); Ioan Pătruș, 'Otnositel'no drevnosti slavianskogo vliianiia na rumynskii iazyk' [The evaluation of the early Slavic influence on the Romanian language], *Romanoslavica* 16 (1968), pp. 23–29; Ioan Pătruș, 'Latin et slave dans le lexique du roumain,' *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 16 (1971), pp. 299–309; Ioan Pătruș, *Studii de limba română și slavistică* [Studies in the Romanian Language and Slavic Studies] (Cluj: Dacia, 1974), pp. 104–105, 121, and 241. For a statistics of Slavic loans in Romanian, see Alexandru Rosetti, *Influența limbilor slave meridionale asupra limbii române (sec. VI–XII)* [The Influence of the South Slavic Languages on the Romanian Language between the Sixth and the Twelfth Century] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RPR, 1954), p. 12. Some features of Romanian, such as preiotacization or the vocative case, may indeed be the result of contact with Slavic, but there is no way of establishing a firm chronological framework for these phenomena. See now Peter P. Petrucci, *Slavic Features in the History of Rumanian* (Munich/Newcastle: Lincom Europa, 1999).

49 See, for example, Xhelal Ylli, *Das slavische Lehngut im Albanischen* (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1997), p. 318. For the influence of Common Slavic on Albanian, see also Eric P. Hamp, 'Early Slavic influence in Albanian,' *Balkansko ezikoznanie* 14 (197), 11–17. For Greek, see Gustav Meyer, *Neugriechische Studien*, II (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1894), p. 68; Ekkehard W. Bornträger, 'Die slavischen Lehnwörter im Neugriechischen,' *Zeitschrift für Balkanologie* 25 (1989), 8–25. For the specific problem of the three words in both Albanian and Greek, see the arguments of Moutsos, 'Early Graeco-Slavic contacts.'

50 Wolfgang Rothe, *Die Einführung in die historische Laut- und Formenlehre des Rumänischen* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1957), p. 36. For rhotacism as a feature of both Albanian and Romanian to be dated before contact with Slavic, see Grigore Brâncuș, 'Rotacismul din limba română' [Rhotacism in Romanian], *Thraco-Dacica* 10 (1989), 173–180.

51 For a discussion of this word viewed as Proto-Slavic, see Georg Holzer's paper in this volume. For *karouta* and *karrutë* as deriving from Latin (or rather Romance), see Moutsos, 'Early Graeco-Slavic contacts,' pp. 48–52.

'fall of the weak jers,' the 'vocalization of the strong jers,' the palatalization of the velars, and, most important, the metathesis of the liquids).⁵² One of them, in both languages, is the word derived from the Slavic ethnic name in its Latin form (*Sclavus*) yielding *șchiau* in Romanian and *Shqâ* in the Geg dialect of northern Albania. In both cases, the word designates speakers of Slavic languages, often Orthodox Bulgarians.⁵³ Conversely, the word by which speakers of Romance are designated in Old Church Slavonic is *Vlach*, in itself a loan from an East Germanic dialect presumably still spoken in the Lower Danube region *ca.* 600.⁵⁴ Contacts between Sclavenes and Gepids are well documented in historical sources. In 549 or 550, a candidate to the Lombard throne named Hildigis fled to the Gepids, followed by a retinue of both Lombards and Sclavenes. He later went to the Sclavenes together with his followers, before moving to Italy where he joined the army of King Totila.⁵⁵ One year later, the Gepids took the Sclavenes returning from a raid across the Balkans "under their protection and ferried them across" the Danube, receiving one solidus per head as payment for their labor.⁵⁶ During their raid across the Danube in 593, the Roman troops captured a Gepid, "who

52 For various dates proposed for these transformations by various linguists, see Birnbaum, *Common Slavic*, pp. 4, 228, and 232.

53 For *Shqâ*, see Schramm, *Ein Damm bricht*, p. 201. For Romanian *șchei* (plural of *șchiau*), see I. Hurdubețiu, 'Originea șcheilor și răspîndirea lor pe teritoriul carpato-dunărean' [The origin of the *șchei* and their distribution in the Carpatho-Danube region], *Studii și articole de istorie* 14 (1969), pp. 195–205; István Petrovics, 'Bulgarians of southern Transylvania in the Middle Ages,' in *Vtori mezhdunaroden kongres po bălgaristika, Sofiia, 23 mai–3 iuni 1986 g. Dokladi 6: Bălgarskite zemi v drevnostta Bălgariia prez srednovekovieto*, [Second International Congress of Bulgarian Studies, Sofia 23 May–3 June, 1986: Papers 6: Bulgarian Lands in Antiquity. Bulgaria before the Middle Ages], eds Kh. Khristov, P. Zarev, V. Georgiev, *et al.* (Sofia: BAN, 1987), pp. 273–278. For the Latin form *Sclavus* as a shorter, perhaps pejorative form of *Sclavenus*, see Curta, *The Making of the Slavs*, p. 55 with n. 42 and 60. The idea of *Sclavus* as a pejorative form of *Sclavenus* has been first advanced by Petar Skok, 'Sloveninu>sclavus', in *Mélanges de philologie et d'histoire offerts à M. Antoine Thomas par ses élèves et ses amis* (Paris: H. Champion, 1927), pp. 413–416.

54 For *vlach*, *vlaš'k* deriving from Germanic *walha-* and *walhiska*, see Schramm, *Ein Damm bricht*, pp. 149–150. The metathesis of the liquids *-alch->-lach-* shows this to be an early loan, in any case earlier than *ca.* 800. However, it is not the only piece of evidence of Slavic-Germanic language contact in the Lower Danube region. Even the name of the Danube in most Slavic languages (*Dunav*) ultimately derives from an East-Germanic dialect. See also Gottfried Schramm, 'Frühe Schicksal der Rumänen. Acht Thesen zur Lokalisierung der lateinischen Kontinuität in Südosteuropa (I. Teil),' *Zeitschrift für Balkanologie* 21 (1985), pp. 223–241, here p. 237.

55 Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars* VII 35.16, 19, and 21–22. For Hildigis' itinerary, see I. Margetić, 'Neka pitanja boravka langobarda u Sloveniji' [Notes on the Lombard settlement in Slovenia], *Arheološki vestnik* 43 (1992), 149–173, here p. 169. For contacts between Slavs, Lombards, and Gepids, see also P.V. Shuvalov, 'Slaviane i germantsy v Srednem Podunav'e v 488–566 gg.' [Slavs and Germans in the Lower Danube region between 488 and 566], in *Slaviane. Etnogenez i etnicheskaia istoriia (Mezhdistsiplinarnye issledovaniia)* [Slavs: Ethnogenesis and ethnic history. Interdisciplinary studies], eds A. S. Gerd and G. S. Lebedev (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989), pp. 115–20.

56 Procopius of Caesarea, *Wars* VIII 25.1–6. For the date of this episode, see Curta, *The Making of the Slavs*, p. 87.

had once long before been of the Christian religion," was now a friend of the Slavene 'king' Musocius, spoke fluently Latin, and knew Avar songs.⁵⁷ Both Gepids and Slavenes under the command of the qagan participated in the Avar siege of Constantinople in 626. Assuming that the Slavenes spoke Slavic (an assumption rarely, if ever, questioned by either linguists or historians, but still nothing more than an assumption!⁵⁸) and the Gepids an East Germanic dialect, then we have sufficient evidence to support the idea of a Slavic-Germanic language contact responsible for such Germanic loans into Slavic as the name of the Danube or the name for speakers of Latin or Romance.⁵⁹ Moreover, no evidence exists that interpreters ever mediated such contacts.⁶⁰ The Slavene warriors in Hildigis' retinue must have been bilingual, much like contemporary Antes in Justinian's armies fighting against the Ostrogoths in Italy. This is also true for the Gepid who befriended the Slavene 'king' Musocius.

By contrast, there is very little evidence that speakers of Slavic had any significant contact with Turkic. As a consequence, and since the latest stratum of loan words in Common Slavic is Iranian in origin, Johanna Nichols advanced the idea that the Avars spoke an Iranian, not a Turkic language.⁶¹ To be sure, a small number of short inscriptions on such artifacts as the silver cups from graves no. 5 in Budapest-Tihanyi Plaza and 1 in Kiskőrös-Vágóhíd or the gilded silver strap end from grave 1280 at Zamárdi turned out to be Soghdian, and at least one of them may have been produced within the qaganate.⁶² But other inscriptions,

57 Theophylact Simocatta VI 9.1-10. For this episode, see Curta, *The Making of the Slavs*, p. 348.

58 There is no evidence of the language spoken by the Slavenes of the sixth century. Much has been made of several names mentioned in historical sources (Dauritas, Ardagastus, Peiragastus, Mezamer, Kelagast, Musocius, Dabragezas, Usigardus), but no satisfactory argument has so far been made that such names are Slavic. In addition, even if they were indeed typically Slavic, they certainly do not tell us much about the language the individuals bearing these names used for daily communication with their fellow warriors and tribesmen. See B. Struminskij, 'Were the Antes Eastern Slavs?', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3-4 (1979-1980), 786-796; Z. Kaleta, 'The reconstruction of the earliest evolutionary stages of Slavic surnames in the context of European name-giving,' in *Probleme der älteren Namensschichten. Leipziger Symposion, 21. bis 22. November 1989*, ed. E. Eichler (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1991), pp. 223-236.

59 See Schramm, *Ein Damm bricht*, pp. 125-144, who believes, however, that such loans were borrowed from the language spoken by the Ostrogoths ca. 400 north of the Black Sea steppes in modern Ukraine.

60 Unlike the situation in the Baltic area ca. 1000. The *Saga of Olaf Trygvasson* mentions an encounter between King Olaf and his men aboard the famous ship *Ormr inn langi* and a group of men sailing on a much smaller, sixteen-oared vessel. Olaf spoke with somebody from the other ship's crew in a language that nobody, except the polyglot king, could understand. The 'strange' language was that spoken in Vindland (Wendish, i.e., Slavic). The Old Norse literature includes many episodes in which interpreters are needed to communicate with the Wends. The Old Norse word for interpreter is *túlkr*, a loan-word derived from Slavic. See Townend, *Language and History*, p. 148.

61 Nichols, 'Linguistic geography,' p. 387.

62 J. Harmatta, 'Sogdian inscriptions on Avar objects,' *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 48 (1995), pp. 61-65, here p. 62. Harmatta believes the Zamárdi inscription to testify to the presence of Soghdian goldsmiths within the Avar qaganate.

such as that from Szarvas, are clearly in Turkic runes and the scraps of linguistic evidence that we have (in the form of several rank titles, such as *iugurrus* or *tar-qan*) also point to a Turkic language.⁶³ At least one word, *zhupan*, is a Turkic loan in several Slavic languages, in which it had a remarkable career as a rank title, albeit applied to different social realities.⁶⁴ But nothing survives from the Avar language, however we may choose to classify it, in the otherwise rich evidence of place-names in Hungary. All place-names of Turkic origin in the Alföld are of a much later date and should be associated with the Cuman settlement of the thirteenth century.⁶⁵ Almost all place names that could be dated on various grounds before the arrival of the Magyars are of Slavic origin.⁶⁶ This has been interpreted as evidence that the Avars spoke Slavic, at least prior to the demise

63 J. Harmatta, 'Turk and Avar runic inscriptions on metal belt-plates,' *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 37 (1996–1997), pp. 321–330. For the Szarvas inscription, see also I. Juhász, 'Ein awarenzeitlicher Nadelhalter mit Kerbinschrift aus Szarvas,' *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 35 (1983), pp. 373–377; A. Róna-Tas, 'Problems of the east European scripts with special regard to the newly found inscription of Szarvas,' in *Popoli delle steppe: Unni, Avari, Ungari. Settimane di studio, Spoleto 23–29 aprile 1987*, II (Spoleto: Presso la Sede del Centro, 1988), pp. 483–511. For the linguistic evidence of Avar as a Turkic language, see Z. Gombocz, 'A pannóniai avarok nyelvéről' [The language of the Pannonian Slavs], *Magyar nyelv* 12 (1916), 97–102; B. von Arnim, 'Avarisches,' *Zeitschrift für slawische Philologie* 9 (1932), 403–406; L. Ligeti, 'A pannóniai avarok etnikuma és nyelve' [The ethnicity and the language of the Pannonian Slavs], *Magyar nyelv* 82 (1986), 129–151. Attempts to read the runic inscriptions as Ugrian texts have not been very successful. See Dezső Csallány, 'Die Sprache der europäischen Awaren auf Grund von Kerbschriften aus Grabfunden,' in *Actes du VIII^e Congrès international des sciences préhistoriques et protohistoriques, Beograd 9–15 septembre 1971*, ed. G. Novak, III (Belgrade: Comité National d'Organisation, 1973), pp. 344–346.

64 The literature on *zhupan* is very rich. See, for example, T. Wasilewski, 'Les župy et les županie des Slaves méridionaux et leur place dans l'organisation des Etats médiévaux,' in *I. Międzynarodowy kongres archeologii słowiańskiej* (Wrocław, etc.: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1970), 3: 217–223; P. Malingoudis, 'Die Institution des župans als Problem der frühslawischen Geschichte,' *Cyrrillomethodianum* 2 (1972–1973), pp. 61–76; Cristijan Popescu, 'BAN – Repere cultural-politice pentru istoria unui cuvînt' [Ban. Cultural and political remarks on the history of a word], *Suceava* 10 [1983], pp. 419–429; M. Hardt, 'Der Supan: Ein Forschungsbericht,' *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 39 (1990), pp. 161–171; I. Fodor, 'Neue Bemerkungen zum Verhältnis von slawisch und ungarisch župan-span-ispán,' *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* 21 (1993–1994), pp. 135–9.

65 L. Benkő, 'La situation linguistique des Hongrois de la conquête et ce qui en résulte,' in *Les Hongrois et l'Europe. Conquête et intégration*, ed. S. Csernus and K. Korompay (Paris/Szeged: Université de Szeged (JATE)/Paris III–Sorbonne Nouvelle (CIEH)/Institut Hongrois de Paris, 1999), pp. 121–132, here p. 129. For Cumans in Hungary and the linguistic evidence associated with them, see A. Pálóczi-Horváth, 'Steppe traditions and cultural assimilation of a nomadic people: the Cumanians in Hungary in the 13th–14th century,' in *Archaeological Approaches to Cultural Identity*, ed. S. Shennan (London/Boston/Sidney: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 291–302; N. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom. Jews, Muslims, and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c.1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 244–267, here p. 265.

66 Benkő, 'La situation linguistique,' p. 130. For the Slavic influence on Hungarian, see I. Kniezsa, *A magyar nyelv szláv jövevényszavai* [Slavic Loans in the Hungarian Language] (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1955); L. Hadrovics, 'Die slavischen Elemente im Ungarischen,' *Zeitschrift für slawische Philologie* 29 (1960), pp. 1–28.

of the qaganate at the hands of the Frankish warriors.⁶⁷ But did the Avars really speak Slavic?

AVARS AND SLAVIC

The historical evidence clearly indicates that Avars had no problems communicating with the Sclavenes and the Antes in whatever language(s) they may have used. In about 560, as the Avars made their entrance into the steppes north of the Black Sea, the Antes sent an envoy named Mezamer to ransom some of his tribesmen taken prisoner by the Avars in recent raids into Antian territory. The envoy was killed at the orders of the qagan, but not before speaking. Not only was the qagan able to understand what Mezamer was saying, apparently without the assistance of any interpreter, but “that Kutrigur who was a friend of the Avars and had very hostile designs against the Antae” must have been able to understand Mezamer as well, if only because he apparently instigated the qagan to kill the envoy.⁶⁸ Shortly before 578, the same qagan sent an embassy to the Sclavenes led by a chieftain named Daurentius (or Dauritas), asking them to accept Avar suzerainty and to pay him tribute. To such claims, Daurentius boastfully replied, “others do not conquer our land, we conquer theirs; and so it shall always be for us, as long as there are wars and weapons.”⁶⁹ The Avar envoys understood very well the words of the Slavene leader in whatever language he was speaking. When in 592, the qagan of the Avars ordered the Sclavenes to build boats for his troops to cross the Danube River, they too must have understood his words very well.⁷⁰ The same is true for the Slavene warriors whom the qagan sent in 603 to help the Lombard king Agilulf conquer the city of Cremona.⁷¹ Slavene warriors fought under the direct command of the qagan under the walls of Thessalonica in 617 or 618⁷²

67 Benkő, ‘La situation linguistique,’ p. 129.

68 Menander the Guardsman, fr. 3. For the date of this episode, see G. G. Litavrin, ‘Izvestiia Menandra Protiktora ob otnosheniiakh avarov i slavian’ [Menander the Guardsman on Avar-Slavic relations], in *Vizantiia, Sredizemnomorie, slavianskii mir* [Byzantium, the Mediterranean and the Slavic world], ed. by G.G. Litavrin, V.G. Karasev, S.P. Karpov, *et al.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1991), pp. 7–18, here p. 8.

69 Menander the Guardsman, fr. 21; the English translation is from R.C. Blockley, *The History of Menander the Guardsman* (Liverpool: F. Cairns, 1985), p. 195. For Menander's sources and style, see I.A. Levinskaia and S.R. Tokhtas'ev, ‘Menandr Protektor’ [Menander the Guardsman], in *Svod drevneishikh pis'mennykh izvestii o slavianakh* [Collection of the oldest written sources on the Slavs], vol. 2, eds L.A. Gindin, S.A. Ivanov, and G.G. Litavrin (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), pp. 311–356, here pp. 328 and 349–350.

70 Theophylact Simocatta VI 3.9–4.1. There were numerous Slavene warriors in the Avar army, as indicated by Theophylact Simocatta VIII 3.14–15.

71 Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV 28.

72 *Miracles of St Demetrius* II 2. 197–198. For the date of the siege, see Paul Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans. II: Commentaire* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1981), pp. 99–100.

and of Constantinople in 626.⁷³ Finally, the so-called *Chronicle of Fredegar* spells out the very intimate relations between Avars and Slavs (especially Slavic women) on the western fringes of the qaganate.⁷⁴

But all this evidence cannot tell us whether Avars spoke Slavic or not. All that it shows is that communication was possible and indeed frequent between those whom our sources call 'Avars' and 'Sclavenes,' respectively. However, communication could have well taken place in Slavic, Avar, or any other language of choice. Some Slavs, at least, spoke very similar dialects, if not one and the same language as that in all the above-mentioned episodes. According to Paul the Deacon, when the Dalmatian Slavs crossed the sea and plundered the duchy of Benevento in ca. 642, the Beneventan duke Raduald 'talked familiarly with these Slavs in their own language, and when in this way he had lulled them into greater indolence for war, he fell upon them and killed almost all of them.'⁷⁵ Raduald had previously been duke of Friuli, an area in which Slavs were a familiar presence at that time. Raduald had no doubt learned to speak Slavic in northeastern Italy, but the episode also shows that the Slavs in Friuli and the neighboring region in what is today Slovenia spoke the same language as the Dalmatian Slavs in what is now Bosnia. The historical evidence points to language contact between Slavs and Avars, on one hand, or Slavs and Lombards, on the other, but the specific languages in use in communication situations are not named. The reason may be that languages had a chance to be mentioned where interpreters were needed. This is certainly the case of another, slightly later episode that might shed some light on the issue of the language in use among Avars. The apocryphal *Life of St. Pancratius*, bishop of Taormina, written by a certain Evagrius in the late 600s or early 700s⁷⁶ mentions a group of Avars taken prisoner by an army of Sicilian sol-

73 Nicephorus, *Short History*, ed. C. Mango (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990), p. 58; G.G. Litavrin, 'Patriarkh Nikifor' [Patriarch Nicephorus], in *Svod drevneishikh pis'mennykh izvestii o slavianakh* [Collection of the oldest written sources on the Slavs], vol. 1, ed. S.A. Ivanov, G.G. Litavrin, and V.K. Ronin (Moscow: "Vostochnaia literatura" RAN, 1995), pp. 221-247, here p. 236.

74 Fredegar IV 48. See Curta, 'Slavs in Fredegar,' pp. 149-151.

75 Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* IV 38-39 and 44. For the Dalmatian origin of this raid, see A. Guillou, 'Migration et présence slaves en Italie du VI^e au XI^e siècle,' *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 14-15 (1973), pp. 11-16, here p. 13; O. R. Borodin, 'Slaviane v Italii i Istrii v VI-VIII vv.' [Slavs in Italy and Istria between the sixth and the eighth century], *Vizantiiskii Vremennik* 44 (1983), pp. 48-59, here p. 57.

76 M. Capaldo, 'Un insediamento slavo presso Siracusa nel primo millennio d. C.,' *Europa Orientalis* 2 (1983), pp. 5-17, here pp. 5-6; T. Olajos, 'Quelques remarques sur une peuplade slave en Hellade,' *Vizantiiskii Vremennik* 55 (1994), pp. 106-110, here pp. 107-108; C.J. Stallman, *The Life of S. Pancratius of Taormina*, Ph.D. diss. (University of Oxford, 1986), pp. 156 and 247. Evagrius's portrait of Bonifatius, the prefect (*hypatos*) of Taormina, as a duke reminds one of Theodore, the duke of Naples, or of the eighth-century duke of Sardinia, Theodotus. On the other hand, Evagrius provides interesting details about the mustering of troops in Taormina by means of an *adnoumion*, a term that "makes sense only in the context of the thematic system with soldiers distributed and settled in the provinces," since the word is not found before the introduction of the first themes (Stallman, *The Life of S. Pancratius*, p. 240).

diers raiding the territories of Dyrrachium and Athens. By means of a translator (*dia tou ermeneos*), the prisoners declare that they worship fire, water, and their own swords.⁷⁷ That St. Pancratius needs a translator to understand what the prisoners say indicates that the language they speak is neither Greek nor Latin. What language is it then? It is hard to believe that, given the unfamiliarity of Pancratius with things Avar, speakers of the Avar language were readily available in Taormina ca. 700 to serve as interpreters. But there certainly were Slavs (presumably speaking Slavic) in the neighborhood, as Evagrius mentions their little huts in the vicinity of Syracuse.⁷⁸ The translator employed to interrogate the Avar prisoners may well have been a member of the Slavic community near Syracuse, and if he spoke Slavic, the Avars must have spoken that language as well. The *Life of St. Pancratius* thus indicates that whatever that language might have been, the Avars spoke the language of the Slavs. It is important to note at this point that the Avars in question are not those from the qaganate properly speaking, but from territories beyond its southern periphery, in the Balkans. Is it possible therefore that the Avars may have contributed to the linguistic spread of Slavic, assuming that that was the language in use amongst Slavs?

Several isolexes in the East Slovak dialects have analogies in the Balkans, while the morphology of dialects from southwestern Slovakia points to analogous phenomena in Serbo-Croatian and Macedonian.⁷⁹ Slovakian dialects seem to be divided along fault lines of a relatively recent date, indicated, among other things, by the depalatalization *ě* > *a*. The analogies in question may also be of a relatively late date, but precisely how late is very difficult, if not impossible, to establish. On the other hand, some dialect differences in Slovakia seem to be quite old,⁸⁰ perhaps earlier than the fall of the Avar qaganate. Can the expansion

77 Stallman, *The Life of S. Pancratius*, p. 271. Stallman observes that the Avar episode contains elements that betray Evagrius' narrative strategies. When Bonifatius presents his prisoners, the Taorminians declare that they will make the captives speak Greek and Latin and become Christians, as they have done before with Persians and Macedonians, a detail Stallman places within the "realm of the aetiological excursus," an example of Evagrius' "intention of advancing the historical importance of Taormina." What the prisoners have to say about their religion reminds one of Bayan, the qagan of the Avars who, according to Menander the Guardsman (fr. 63) took an oath on his sword, as well as on the heavenly fire and on water, that he would not attack the Romans. No evidence exists that Evagrius knew Menander's *History*.

78 Stallman, *The Life of S. Pancratius*, p. 355. The Avar episode appears in two eleventh-century manuscripts, one from Vienna, the other from Moscow. According to both, the Avar prisoners had been captured in the provinces (*eparchiai*) of Dyrrachium and Athens. See Capaldo, 'Un insediamento slavo,' p. 13; Olajos, 'Quelques remarques,' pp. 107–108.

79 A. Habovštiak, 'The ethnogenesis of the Slovaks from the linguistic aspect,' *Ethnologia Slovaca et Slavica* 24–25 (1992–1993), pp. 13–29, here pp. 18–19. See also V. Blanár, 'Die kontinuierliche Entwicklung des Slowakischen im Lichte der slavischen historisch-vergleichenden Lexikologie,' in *Central Europe in the 8th–10th Centuries. International Scientific Conference, Bratislava October 2–4, 1995*, eds D. Čaplovič and J. Dorul'a (Bratislava: Ministry of Culture in the Slovak Republic/Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1997), pp. 177–183, here p. 177. The closest to Balkan Slavic seems to be the Middle Slovak dialect.

80 G. Holzer, 'Zum gemeinslavischen Dialektkontinuum,' *Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch* 43 (1997), pp. 87–102, here p. 88.

of the qaganate explain the spread of Slavic? The archaeological evidence suggests that it was precisely during the last half-century of Avar history (ca. 750–800) that the influence of Avar material culture spread into such areas as Bohemia or Poland.⁸¹ In Bohemia, all place-names and river-names mentioned in ninth- or tenth-century sources are pre-Slavic. By contrast, all dukes and princes have typically Slavic names ending in *-slav*, an indication of the political authority of the persons in question.⁸² Judging by this evidence, which has of course its own problems, Slavic was in use especially among members of the elite.

With the exception of several tribal names in the late ninth-century *Descriptio civitatum ad septentrionalem pagam Danubii*, the work of an unknown author known as the Bavarian Geographer,⁸³ there is no evidence of Slavic north of the Carpathian Mountains before ca. 900. Most typically Pomeranian developments, such as the sound change *TǎlT>TloT, which took place throughout the entire Polish territory were only attested in the 900s.⁸⁴ Similarly, the earliest evidence of a northwestern group of Slavic languages points to phonemic developments, such as the depalatalization of the vowels, the evidence of which cannot be dated earlier than the mid-ninth century.⁸⁵ But the material collected by Joseph Schütz from the Main region of Germany suggests strong links with Pannonian Slavic, not with neighboring areas immediately to the east or to the northeast.⁸⁶ The linguistic evidence, to the extent that

81 N. Profantová, 'Awarische Funde aus den Gebieten nördlich der awarischen Siedlungsgrenzen,' in *Awarenforschungen*, ed. F. Daim, II (Vienna: Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte der Universität Wien, 1992), pp. 605–801, here pp. 616 and 653–655. For Poland, see also H. Zoll-Adamikowa, 'Zur Chronologie der awarenzeitlichen Funde aus Polen,' in *Probleme der relativen und absoluten Chronologie ab Latènezeit bis zum Frühmittelalter. Materialien des III internationalen Symposiums: Grundprobleme der frögeschichtlichen Entwicklung im nördlichen Mitteldonauegebiet. Kraków-Karniowice 3.–7. Dezember 1990*, eds K. Godłowski and R. Madyda-Legutko (Cracow: Secesja, 1992), pp. 297–315; W. Szymański, 'Stan wiedzy o zabytkach awarskich z obszarów położonych na północ od terytorium kaganatu' [The state of research on Avar finds in territories north of the Avar qaganate], *Archeologia Polski* 40 (1995), 125–145.

82 J. Skutíl, 'Die Toponymie und Anthroponymie der böhmischen Länder in den geschichtlichen Quellen des 6.–9. Jh.,' *Onomastic Bulletin of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences* 26 (1985), 158–168, here p. 165.

83 See J. Spal, 'Jména západních Slovanů u Geografa Bavorského' [West Slavic names in the Bavarian Geographer], *Slavia* 24 (1955), pp. 4–8; H. Kunstmann, 'Der alte Polennamen Lach, Lech und die Lendizi des Geographus Bavarus,' *Welt der Slawen* 32 (1987), pp. 145–157.

84 E. Rzetelska-Felesko, 'Slavonic Pomerania in the past: its links with the neighboring areas and its internal division,' in *Medieval Dialectology*, ed. J. Fisiak (Berlin/New York: Mouton/de Gruyter, 1995), pp. 217–224, here p. 220.

85 G. Schaarschmidt, 'The northwest Slavic area umlaut i u: chronology and conditions,' *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 34 (1992), pp. 269–277, here p. 272.

86 J. Schütz, *Frankens mainwendische Namen. Geschichte und Gegenwart* (München: A. Kovac, 1994). See also O.N. Trubachev, 'Sclavania am Obermain im merovingischer und karolingischer Zeit: die Sprachreste,' in *Central Europe in the 8th–10th Centuries. International Scientific Conference, Bratislava October 2–4, 1995*, eds D. Čaplovič and J. Dorul'a (Bratislava: Ministry of Culture in the Slovak Republic/Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1997), pp. 53–55, here pp. 53–54.

it can be dated with any degree of accuracy, thus suggests that the disintegration of Common Slavic into dialects was not much earlier than the collapse of the Avar polity in *ca.* 800. Horace G. Lunt has indeed proposed that a late phase in the history of Common Slavic marked by dialect differentiation had already begun in the mid-ninth century.⁸⁷ Could this new phase be in any way associated with, if not the result of, the political changes taking place within the Middle Danube region as a consequence of the collapse of the Avar qaganate? In any case, the existing evidence indicates that beginning with *ca.* 800 the process of dialect differentiation was as advanced in the south as it was in the north. Shortly after the middle of the ninth century, the earliest Old Church Slavonic texts were produced that already show a southeastern dialect group. The tenth-century Kiev Folia display a Czech or southwestern South Slavic cluster of features, while the Freising Documents of *ca.* 1000 hint at Alpine features illustrating a pre-Slovene or northwestern subdivision.⁸⁸ As a consequence, all convergent developments of the subsequent period cannot be attributed to the (Common) Slavic *lingua franca* any more, in spite of Old Church Slavonic being yet another unifying force, which some have aptly called a *lingua franca*.⁸⁹

By A.D. 600, the strong Avar polity built up by Bayan and his successors had become a major political factor in Central and Southeast Europe. The expansion of the qaganate had drawn people from disparate backgrounds and molded them not into a unified *gens* but into a segmented mass with deep fissures running along cultural and ethnic lines.⁹⁰ It is along such fissures that the qaganate was on the point of breaking apart in the early seventh century.⁹¹ It is most likely under such circumstances that a language already used in the 500s for cross-cultural communication in the Lower Danube area may have become the *lingua franca* of the Avar qaganate. Slavic was most likely the language of an important number of subjects or clients of the qagan and, as such, must have already been the preferred language of communication within large segments of the Avar

87 H.G. Lunt, 'Proto-Slavic or Common Slavic versus Pan-Slavic. Morpho-lexical puzzles of early Slavic written dialects,' *International Journal of Slavic Linguistics and Poetics* 39-40 (1996), pp. 279-298, here p. 279. For the difficult task of sorting out Common Slavic and regional features in Old Church Slavonic texts, see Schenker, *The Dawn of Slavic*, p. 149.

88 V. Capkova, 'The Freising monuments,' in *Irland und die Christenheit. Bibelstudien und Mission*, eds P. Ni Chathain and M. Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), pp. 461-470; H. Birnbaum, 'Wie alt ist das altertümlichste Sprachdenkmal? Weitere Erwägungen zur Herkunft der Kiewer Blätter und zu ihrem Platz in der Literatur des slawischen Mittelalters,' *Welt der Slawen* 26 (1981), pp. 225-258.

89 V. Nikolova, 'Sotsialni funktsii na starobălgarskiia ezik' [On the social function of Old Bulgarian], *Kirilo-metodieviski studii* 5 (1988), pp. 98-108, here p. 105; Curta, *The Making of the Slavs*, p. 345. Even before the phrase *lingua franca* came into use, such scholars as V.T. Zaimova and I. Gălăbov referred to Old Church Slavonic as *koiné*, 'international language,' or 'supernational language.'

90 For Avar clans and tribes, see *Strategikon* XI 2.34-35. For non-Avar groups within the qaganate, see Pohl, *Die Awaren*, pp. 225-36.

91 A. Avenarius, 'Die Konsolidierung des Awarenkaganates und Byzanz im 7. Jahrhundert,' *Byzantina* 13 (1985), pp. 1019-1032.

society. It was also a language of great homogeneity that, once learned, could serve for communication with separate, very different groups of 'Slavs.' Judging by the archaeological evidence (the only one available for this period), during the so-called Late Avar period (ca. 700–800), the Avar society underwent major social and cultural transformations.⁹² The increasing number of agricultural implements and the decreasing number of weapons deposited in eighth-century burial assemblages point to a process of sedentization. On the other hand, the second half of that century coincided with a 'democratization' of the right to bear arms. Every third male skeleton in the large cemetery at Devínska Nová Ves (Slovakia) was buried with some kind of weapon, usually for mounted shock combat. The absence of rich princely graves is in sharp contrast with the preceding period (Early and Middle Avar, ca. 600–700). However, both written sources pertaining to the enormous booty collected after the Carolingian conquest and the extraordinary hoard of gold found in the late eighteenth-century in Sânnicolau Mare/Nagyszentmiklós suggest that wealth was concentrated at the top of the Avar society without any further distribution down the social hierarchy.⁹³ In short, Late Avar society appears as much more stratified during the 700s, with many more power centers competing against each other, as well as all against the power of the qagan, in the years before and shortly after Charlemagne's campaigns of 791–795. This stratification may have encouraged the generalization of the Slavic *lingua franca*. At any rate, by 700 Avars living in regions far away from the center of power within the qaganate had no problems communicating important ideas about their religion in a language that was also used by members of a Slavic community in Sicily. If the evidence of place-names in Hungary is to be trusted at all, it strongly suggests that before the collapse of the qaganate the Avars became speakers of Slavic. The details of how and why

92 I. Erdélyi, 'Bemerkungen zur Gesellschaft der Awaren,' *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 33 (1990–1992), pp. 407–411; J. Szentpéteri, 'Archäologische Studien zur Schicht der Waffenträger des Awarentums im Karpatenbecken II.,' *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 46 (1994), pp. 231–306; J. Zábojník, 'Zum Vorkommen der Reitergräber auf Gräberfeldern aus der Zeit des awarischen Kaganats,' in *Ethnische und kulturelle Verhältnisse an der mittleren Donau vom 6. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert. Symposium Nitra 6. bis 10. November 1994*, eds D. Bialeková and J. Zábojník (Bratislava: VEDA, 1996), pp. 179–194; A. Distelberger, 'Arme "reiche" Mädchen? Altersabhängiger Schmuckerwerb der Awarinnen des Gräberfeldes von Mödling, Österreich,' *Ethnographisch-archäologische Zeitschrift* 38 (1997), pp. 551–565. 'Late Avar' is a technical term introduced by the Hungarian archaeologist Ilona Kovrig. On the basis of her analysis of the Alattyán cemetery, Kovrig divided the entire Avar period into three phases, namely Early (568–650/60), Middle (650/60–700), and Late Avar (700–800).

93 For the Carolingian conquest and the Avar hoard, see W. Pohl, 'Von den Awaren zur fränkischen Avaria,' *Mitteilungen des Heimatkundlichen Arbeitskreises für die Stadt und den Bezirk Tulln* 7 (1992), pp. 56–62. For the Nagyszentmiklós/Sânnicolaul Mare hoard, see Cs. Bálint, 'Il tesoro di Nagyszentmiklós,' in *Gli Avari. Un popolo d'Europa*, ed. G.C. Menis (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1995), pp. 201–207; F. Daim and P. Stadler, 'Der Goldschatz von Sannicolaul Mare (Nagyszentmiklós),' in *Reitervölker aus dem Osten. Hunnen + Awaren. Burgenländische Landesausstellung 1996. Schloß Halbturn, 26. April–31. Oktober 1996*, eds F. Daim, K. Kaus, and P. Tomka (Eisenstadt: Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung, 1996), pp. 439–445.

this language acquisition took place will probably remain unknown. Equally unclear is what, if any, was the situation of Slavic in the northern, eastern and northeastern regions of Eastern Europe that escaped Avar control. In my opinion, a case for Slavic being spoken in any form in those regions between 700 and 800 cannot possibly be made, for no written evidence exists for that language that could be dated to the eighth century. We simply do not know what languages were in use in those parts of Europe in the early Middle Ages. It is possible that the expansion of the Avar qaganate during the second half of the eighth century coincided with a linguistic spread of the (newly acquired) Slavic into the neighboring areas of Moravia, Bohemia and southern Poland. The Slavic *lingua franca* of the Avar qaganate could hardly explain the spread of Slavic into Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, all regions that produced so far almost no archaeological evidence of Avar influence. Nor could a historical argument seriously be maintained that Common Slavic was the language spoken in the early Middle Ages in any one of these regions. But for a relatively long period of time the language that linguists reconstruct and call Common Slavic may have preserved an exceptional unity due to its use as a *lingua franca* during the Avar age.