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POLITENESS IN TRANSITION: THE BALKAN EVIDENCE¹

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This article explores the connection of politeness to status and proposes a model of the evolution of politeness in the Balkans over the last four centuries. It takes as a starting point the changes undergone by politeness between the current ('modern') phase of Bulgarian society as we know it from the Bulgarian literature since the last third of the nineteenth century and the preceding 'traditional' phase. The Russian-Turkish War of 1877–1878, which brought to Bulgaria political independence, serves as the conventional boundary between the two phases.

These phases have very different cultural and social characteristics, some of which were shown to correlate with linguistic use² but there also is linguistic change datable around the transition period that cannot be connected in any straightforward way to social or cultural phenomena. Probably the most important node of intersecting lines that contrast the two phases has to do with identity and language as they transformed under the influence of the move from the multiculturalism (with its concomitant multilingualism) of the Ottoman Empire to the monoculturalism / monolingualism of the Bulgarian nation state. For Bulgarians today, it is difficult to even imagine the nested identity of the typical multilingual person of the traditional period with its shifting loyalties (Младенова 2003, 325)³ but Teodorov-Balan's memoirs, in which he describes his

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² Certain conservative varieties (such as the language of folklore or regional dialects) may preserve features characteristic of traditional language use throughout the modern phase.

³ An eighteenth-century testimony of multilingualism as a vehicle of the 'Balkanization' of the languages spoken in the Balkan Peninsula is presented and analysed in Kostov 1999–2000. Regarding the linguistic construction of ethnic and national boundaries during the transition period see Младенова 2003, 334–347.

early years in Bessarabia, give an inkling of what it must have meant to be a member of a multicultural community during the traditional period:

Indeed in the sphere of common economy in Bessarabia (Russian as well as Romanian) one could hear in different localities – depending on the prevalence of one ethnic group over another – mostly three languages: Bulgarian, Romanian and Russian. The prominence of the first was due to numeric strength and of the other two also to state authority: Russian in the north and Romanian in the south. One could hear Turkish as well, where Gagauz people participated in the economy, and – rarely, among individual merchants – Greek also came to the fore. My mother spoke the five Bessarabian languages, which provoked some envy in my father. My early knowledge of these languages comes from her. This is why retailers in Bessarabia are usually multilingual and they do not attach to their language of communication any importance in terms of identity. In the fall of 1933 a Bulgarian, carter in Komrat, drove me from the town to the railway station. He was chatty and he talked to every passer-by and he spoke then in Bulgarian, in Romanian, in Russian and in Turkish! In such economic and social circumstances and with such a cultural stance of the state to the languages of minority groups, the latter do not feel the need to give a national polish to their spirit. Even if such desires do appear, they do not cause an upsurge and die, fade away. This probably is the explanation for the odd fact that when I was living in Kubej [1859–1869] and Komrat [1870–1872] I did not have a Bulgarian national identity and today I cannot even say in what language did I [as a schoolboy] write letters from Komrat to my family in Bolgrad (Теодоров-Балан 1988, 28, in my translation).

For a linguistic commentary to various aspects of traditional Bulgarian society and the transition towards the modern phase readers are referred to Mladenova 1996; 2001; 2002; 2003; Младенова 2003; 2007. These studies reach the conclusion that, on the one hand, status differences were a matter of utmost seriousness to Bulgarians during the traditional period but, on the other hand, their society was much less differentiated than the stratified modern society that was to follow it. The importance of status for members of the traditional society is visible in the damaskin interpretation of the fifth commandment – *Honour your father and your mother* (Exodus, 20:12) – defining the broad group to which one owes the same respect one pays to parents and listing the specific actions that one should take or not take out of deference:

And you should honour not only your father and mother. [...] Respect all who are older than you like your father and bow to them. And stand up to let them sit down first. And do so if you wish them to pray for you and bless you. And you

will also become great and respected because, when you show respect to a person who is older than you, you show respect to God. And do not ever reproach a person for being old, regardless if he is kin or a stranger, rich or poor because you deride and scorn God. And [...] never interrupt an older person but wait for him to say what he knows and only afterwards, if you are asked, say what you know. If you are not asked, keep quiet and pay attention and learn. And, when you sit at a table with somebody who is older than you, never reach for food ahead of him or drink before him. Neither should you sit higher than him even if he is poor. Rather, you should sit lower than everybody (Seventeenth-century Early Modern Bulgarian damaskin – Демина 1971, 49, in my translation).⁴

As always, social conventions become conspicuous in the breach. A true story from the village of Zubernovo, Region Malko Tŭrnovo (Strandža Mountain), shows the importance of status around 1910: a man takes another to court for allegedly not paying his debt back but in fact for addressing him disrespectfully by his first name as *Петко* rather than *Петко чорбаджи* (Горов 1962, 159–160); that is, for omitting the title *чорбаджи* translatable roughly as 'master'. In a folk song recorded in the village of Gabrene, Region Petrič, a young woman does not stand up when two young rebels come in. They threaten to torture her twin brothers for this trespass (СБНУ 61, No. 553). Disrespectful behaviour of females to males was harshly punished according to custom (Маринов 1984, 389–390). These examples show that status differences (in the first case based on wealth and in the second on gender) were underscored in social interaction by obligatory verbal and non-verbal status markers.

Such evidence (and plenty of other discussed in my previously cited articles) shows beyond doubt that status was an important factor regulating social interaction during the traditional period. As to politeness, according to the model proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), there are two kinds of politeness that are deemed to be universal. They aim to maintain the favourable public self-image of individuals (face). Positive politeness addresses one's need to be accepted and appreciated by others and negative politeness the need for personal autonomy. Based on pre-modern European and contemporary non-western data as well as theoretical considerations, critics have shown that these two strategies of politeness, while widely spread in societies around the globe, are far from being universal (Traugott and Dasher 2002, 228–229; Watts, Ide and Ehlich 2005; Apresjan et al. 2006, 250–251).

⁴ This early modern Bulgarian text goes back to a homily on God's Ten Commandments by Damaskēnós Stoudītēs, which circulated in manuscript. It was published recently in Mávou 1999: 203–211.

As expected, Bulgarian urban social life during the modern period is characterized by the coexistence of positive and negative politeness (in tune with the Brown-Levinson model) employing among their tools a system of forms of polite reference in conjunction with a set of rules for their use. Positive politeness also has in its arsenal a large set of conventional formulas, many of them in common use in the Balkan cultural space (Slama-Cazacu 1986; Petrović 2006; Младенова 2007). Negative politeness, on the other hand, in view of its goal of avoiding imposition, predictably favours indirectness in varied linguistic guise.⁵ Negative politeness is absent from Bulgarian rural social interactions, a state of affairs that has also been recorded in other South Slavic areas (Brown and Gilman 1960, 270), in Aromanian (Caragiu-Marioțeanu 1958, 98-99), Albanian and Romani (Helmbrecht 2006, 426, 430) and reconstructed for the Imperial Roman period (Dickey 2002, 94), among others. It can be shown on the basis of the early Modern Bulgarian damaskin texts and the nineteenth-century Bulgarian literature that it was absent during the traditional phase too (Младенова 2001, 42-45; Младенова 2007). Thus social interaction appears to have been governed by different factors during the traditional and the modern phases: status in conjunction with positive politeness during the former and politeness (negative and positive) during the latter period. This state of affairs highlights the existence of a connection (albeit of a different nature) of status with both positive and negative politeness. The connection of status with positive politeness is synchronic but with negative politeness diachronic.

The claim that negative politeness emerged as a result of the reinterpretation of verbal and non-verbal expressions of status differences is confirmed by the well-known fact that in Western Europe asymmetric use of the politeness devices predated their symmetric use, which has been prevalent only since the beginning of the nineteenth century (Helmbrecht 2006, 427). It also correlates with previous generalizations pointing at the replacement of vertical with horizontal distance in linguistic practice as a result of societal transformations (cf., for instance, Traugott and Dasher 2002, 229).

An overview of the linguistic devices of politeness in the Bulgarian seventeenth-century damaskin literature is available in Младенова 2007. The

⁵ The association of positive politeness with indirectness that goes back to Brown and Levinson (1987, 60; see also Helmbrecht 2006, 431) is based on the incorporation of positive politeness as a means towards avoiding acts threatening the negative face of the addressee (basically its hijacking by negative politeness). Its core function as a strategy preserving the positive face of the addressee is more clearly visible in compliments than in commands, requests and advices.

modern repertoire of politeness devices presented in Table 1 shows that speakers can contrast negative and positive politeness by choosing the appropriate pronouns (and/or verbal endings) and noun phrases (used either as address forms or referentially). Positive politeness can further be rendered by conventional formulas and vocative particles, and negative politeness by various expressions of indirectness. These latter devices are specific of each type of politeness and limited to it.

Linguistic expression of politeness in modern society

Table 1.

Conventional formulas	Positive Politeness	Negative Politeness
Indirectness	+	-
Pronouns	-	+
Verbal endings	+	+
Noun phrases in referential use	+	+
Address forms	+	+
Vocative particles	+	+
		-

In this article my focus is on personal pronouns and a type of noun phrases designating persons.

Pronouns (and verbal endings)

In the traditional phase, Bulgarian personal pronouns were not yet markers of politeness. The earliest records of Modern Bulgarian – the seventeenth and eighteenth-century damaskins – show no connection between pronouns and politeness. Neither do Bulgarian regional dialects or the language of folklore. The first indications of change in this regard stem from the eighteenth century. During its last quarter, collections of correspondence specimens in Church Slavonic (called *писмовник*) circulated in Bulgaria. They were meant to serve as models to clerics and laics. These collections consistently employed V pronouns to address a single person, a typical expression of negative politeness.⁶ Despite their unequivocal recommendations, real-life correspondence in Modern Bulgarian written around the same time was far from consistent. See, for instance, (1):

⁶ See the collections from 1783 and 1784, respectively, kept in the Sofia Public Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" (NBKM manuscripts 365 and 366).

- (1) ПОЗДРАВЛЕНИЕ ОТ МЕНЕ [...] ДО ВАША [2PL] МИЛОСТ КНР ДАСКАЛ МИХАИЛ
 ДА ЗНАЕШ [2SG] ЧЕ САМЪ АЗ СТОЯНЪ ПИСАЛЪ [...] (eighteenth or
 nineteenth century NBKM manuscript 695, 47 – Цонев 1923, 316)
 'Greeting from me to your grace Mr. Teacher Mixail. Let it be known
 to you that I, Stojan, have written ...'

Another early testimony of the use of Bulgarian personal pronouns (in tandem with the respective verbal endings) to express politeness comes from the very beginning of the nineteenth century (Софроний Врачански [1803–1806] 1976, 33; 36).

As soon as this use of V pronouns was established, T pronouns became a sign of solidarity (positive politeness) or – if employed inappropriately – a sign of impoliteness, rudeness. This is the situation in contemporary Standard Bulgarian. However, recent research shows that even now Bulgarians – younger speakers more so than older ones – are quite tolerant to the overuse of T pronouns (Алексова 2002).

I think that the most fitting explanation of why the second person plural would be "more polite" than the second person singular can be provided on the basis of Robert Austerlitz's treatment of the Gilyak pronoun system (1959). Austerlitz introduces the pair of opposing terms 'focus' and 'spectrum' to characterize the semantics of personal pronouns. Thus a second-person singular pronoun is a focus, because it is directed at a single point, whereas the second-person plural pronoun is a spectrum, which contains the focus but is broader than it, or, in other words, spectrum is a relaxed focus. So, in terms of politeness strategy, if a T pronoun is a focus and a V pronoun a spectrum, this usage can be subsumed under indirectness, which leads us to the conclusion that the V pronoun is more polite than the T pronoun because it is less direct, less "focused".⁷ This strategy (schematically represented in Table 2) will be called here Strategy A.

Table 2.

Pronouns of politeness and indirectness	
Strategy A 'focus relaxed':	[T PRONOUN] = focus [V PRONOUN] = spectrum

Metonymic honorifics

Noun phrases denoting humans can be relational (kinship terms, words for 'friend', 'enemy', 'neighbour', 'fellow-countryman', 'co-worker', 'master',

⁷ Helmbrecht (2006, 433) reaches similar conclusions following a different line of reasoning.

'servant' etc.) or absolute (a person's first name, words designating a person according to sex, age, occupation, ethnic, religious or national affiliation etc.). Such terms are used either referentially or as address forms. In Младенова 2007 I reach the conclusion that whereas status and positive politeness display a natural affinity to relational terms and negative politeness to absolute terms, the boundary between these categories of noun phrases is transparent: for instance, possessives can transform an absolute term into a relational one.

Here our attention will be focused on a subgroup of noun phrases attested in Church Slavonic and early Modern Bulgarian texts: honorific terms consisting of abstracts accompanied by possessives. The structure of these metonymic rank terms in Modern Bulgarian is either [ABSTRACT NOUN] + [PRONOMINAL POSSESSIVE CLITIC] or [PRONOMINAL POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE] + [ABSTRACT NOUN]. Such formulas must have been the common heritage of all Slavs judging by evidence dating back to the tenth and the eleventh centuries.⁸ This is a representative sample of sentences containing such honorifics:

- (2) а ва[ше] господство та сте зованѣ ѿ с[вето]го димитрія (Seventeenth-century Early Modern Bulgarian damaskin – Демина 1971, 99) 'And you, your lordship, are invited by St. Demetrius' – ѿ господствѣе вѣше· вы| есте званіи гостѣе сѣго (Seventeenth-century archaic damaskin – БАН 24.4.32, 250^v) – καὶ ἡ αὐθεντία σας εἶστε οἱ καλεσμένοι φίλοι ἀπὸ τὸν Ἅγιον (Δαμασκηνός Στουδίτης [1557–1558] 2004, 514);
- (3) амн зацо тои мене да плеснѣва прѣд твоє ц[а]рство (Seventeenth-century Early Modern Bulgarian damaskin – Демина 1971, 170) 'But why should he hit me in front of your kingship?' – прѣвѣно| ли| ѣ прѣ| твоѣ| црѣвѣ, да| поѣнѣнѣть| рѣкѣ| никѣто сѣи (Sixteenth-century archaic damaskin – Илиевски 1972, 2, 546) – поѣвѣт| ли прѣ| црѣвѣи| ти да| вѣзѣнѣнѣть кѣто роуѣкѣ пакѣже сѣ (Seventeenth-century archaic damaskin – БАН 24.4.32, 288^v) – δίκαιον εἶναι ἔμπροσθεν τῆς βασιλείας σου νὰ σηκῶσῃ χέρι τινός; (Δαμασκηνός Στουδίτης [1557–1558] 2004, 293);
- (4) мон г[о]сп[о]днѣ. м[о]ля ваша м[н]л[о]сть, неѣхте замнѣва мон домѣ (Seventeenth-century Early Modern Bulgarian damaskin –

⁸ Cf. владычствиѣ ваше, lit. 'your sovereignty', attested as an address form to a king in S. Venceslai Vita (written around the year 1000 in Bohemia and preserved in copies from the sixteenth century) and in Pseudo-evangelium Nicodemi preserved in a fifteenth-century manuscript of Serbian recension (SJS 1, 197).

- Демина 1971, 245) 'My lord, I am asking your grace, do not ignore my house.'
- (5) н РЕУ[Е] М8 ЕП[Н]СК[О]ПЪ КАКО ТИ НМЕ УЕДО МОЕ. Н С[ВЕ]ТЫН ННКОЛАЕ ТНХО РЕУЕ. ННКОЛАЕ ГРЪШНЫ РАВЪ ВЛ[А]ДЬУЕСТВ8 ТН, С[ВЕ]ТЫН ВЛ[А]Д[Н]КО (Seventeenth-century Early Modern Bulgarian damaskin – Демина 1971, 167) 'And the bishop told him "What is your name, my child?" St. Nicholas softly said: "Nicholas, the sinful slave of your sovereignty, holy sovereign."' – н|т|а|кò| же| в|н|д|ѣ| ѣ|гò| ѣ| е|п|к|п|ъ· к|а|кò| н|м|ѣ|н|ѣ|ш|н| с|е| у|а|дò| мо|ѣ| с|т|ѣ|н|н| ѡ|т|в|ѣ|щ|а| с|м|ѣ|р|е|н|нò| ѡ|б|р|а|з|н|ѣ|, н|н|кò|л|а|е| грѣшнын, р|а|вѣ| в|а|ш|е|гò| с|т|ѣ|н|ш|а|гò| в|л|а|д|ѣ|ств|а (Sixteenth-century archaic damaskin – Илиевски 1972, 2, 540) – Λέγει τον γοῦν ὁ 'Επίσκοπος Πῶς ὀνομάζεσαι τέκνον μου; ὁ "Ἅγιος ἀπεκρίθη ταπεινῶ τῷ σχήματι Νικόλαος ἁμαρτωλός, δοῦλος τῆς σῆς ἀγιότητος Δέσποτα (Δαμασκηνός Στουδίτης [1557-1558] 2004, 290);
- (6) н СДѦТЕ ГО СЪС ВАШЕТО С[ВЕ]ЩЕНСТВО (Seventeenth-century Early Modern Bulgarian damaskin – Демина 1971, 170) 'And judge him with your priesthood' – н| сò|д|н|т|е| ѣ|гò| с|щ|е|н|ствò| в|а|ш|е| (Seventeenth-century archaic damaskin, БАН 24.4.32, 289) – н| с|д|н|т|е| с|щ|е|н|нò|н|а|ѣ|л|ствò| в|а|ш|е| (Sixteenth-century archaic damaskin – Илиевски 1972, 2, 546) – κρίνετέ την ἡ ἀρχιερωσύνη σας (Δαμασκηνός Στουδίτης [1557-1558] 2004, 293);
- (7) рабы ц[а]ревы и на твоа св[ет]ыня сме рабы (Seventeenth-century Early Modern Bulgarian damaskin – Демина 1971, 172) 'We are slaves of the emperor and of your holiness' – р|а|б|ы| ц|а|р|е|в|и| н| т|вò|ѣ| с|т|ѣ|н|н|и| ѣ|с|м|ы| (Seventeenth-century archaic damaskin – БАН 24.4.32, 290^v) – р|а|б|ы| ц|а|р|е|в|ы| н| с|т|ѣ|н|е| т|вò|ѣ|ѣ| ѣ|с|м|ы| (Sixteenth-century archaic damaskin – Илиевски 1972, 2, 530) – Δοῦλοι τοῦ Βασιλέως καὶ τῆς ἀγιωσύνης σου εἴμεσθιν (Δαμασκηνός Στουδίτης [1557-1558] 2004, 294);
- (8) туй са моля на ваша любовъ, да са не лѣните н да дрѣмнете (Eighteenth-century Early Modern Bulgarian damaskin – Милетич 1923, 80) 'This is what I am asking your love [= you, my love], do not idle and do not doze' – Παρακαλῶ τὴν ὑμετέραν ἀγάπην νὰ μὴν ἀμελῆτε καὶ νυστάζετε (Δαμασκηνός Στουδίτης [1557-1558] 2004, 37);
- (9) м|л|нò| же| в|а|ш|е| в|л|гò|у|ѣ|ст|ы|е| не| о|у|н|и|в|е|т|е| н| д|р|ѣ|м|л|е|т|е| (Sixteenth-century archaic damaskin – Илиевски 1972, 2, 549) 'I am asking your piety, do not lose heart and doze' – Παρακαλῶ δὲ τὴν αὐθεντίαν σας, μὴν ἀμελεῖτε καὶ νυστάζετε (Δαμασκηνός Στουδίτης [1557-1558] 2004, 294);

- (10) *варе елика изрекѣтъ къ прѣѣтелствѣхъ ви* (A Wallachian-Bulgarian document from 1474–1477 – Djamo-Diaconiță 1971, 239). ‘No matter how much they say to your friendship [= to you, my friend]...’

An overview of the data in illustrations (2)–(10) is presented in Table 3. Seven of the illustrations go back to the sixteenth-century Greek clerical author Damaskēnós Stoudītēs and for some I have at my disposal both Early Modern Bulgarian and archaic Church Slavonic translations. Terms, attested in other sources but for which I have no parallel texts, are placed in brackets.

Abstracts used as honorifics

Table 3.

Early Modern Bulgarian	Church Slavonic	Greek
господство	господѣствие, господѣство	αὐθεντία
царство	царѣствие, царѣство	βασίλεια ⁹
милост		[φιλανθρωπία]
владичество	[владѣиѣствие], владѣиѣство	[δεσποτία] ¹⁰
свещенство	свѣщенство	ἀγιότης ¹⁰
светиня	свѣтъинѣ ¹¹	ἀγιωσύνη ¹²
	свѣщенноначальство	ἀρχιερωσύνη
любов	любовь	ἀγάπη ¹³
	благочестіе	[εὐσέβεια] ¹⁴
	прѣѣтелство	[φιλότης] ¹⁵

These honorifics may appear in any of the three grammatical persons. The numerous first-person tokens attested in Wallachian-Bulgarian documents (Djamo-Diaconiță 1971, *passim*) are the counterparts of the West European *pluralis maiestatis*.

Illustrations like (5) and (7) show how such metonymic honorifics (which are originally absolute terms) may be used in speech in a way that emphasizes

⁹ Used as a title to the emperor since the fourth century, for example by Athanasios, Theodoretos, Kyrillos of Jerusalem and Isidoros (Ziliacus 1950, 65–66).

¹⁰ Known as a title since the fifth century (Ziliacus 1950, 87–88).

¹¹ First recorded as a title in the eleventh-century *Codex Suprasliensis* (SJS 4, 44).

¹² Both abstracts are used in address forms to high clerics since the sixth century. The second one appears to predominate in the later centuries (Ziliacus 1950, 41–42, 64, 86–87).

¹³ Used as a title since the fifth century (Ziliacus 1950, 63, 86).

¹⁴ An abstract with classical roots frequently used as an honorific to royalty during the Byzantine period (Ziliacus 1950, 46, 68).

¹⁵ This is the first abstract to be attested as an address form (Plato, *Phaedrus* 228d – Ziliacus 1950, 26).

the status difference between speaker and addressee. This usage underscores the similarity between the devices that express positive politeness and those that express status.

From the perspective of the later developments, the most important metonymic honorifics are those based on *господство* – illustrated in example (2) – and *милост* – illustrated in examples (1) and (4). The metonymic honorifics with *милост* are attested since at least the fifteenth century (Djamo-Diaconiță 1971, 217, 267)¹⁶ and are the only ones to be transformed into a popular polite address form that was to be ousted by V pronouns. They are widely used in the Bulgarian literature, for instance by Dobri Vojnikov (1833–1878), Ljuben Karavelov (1834–1879), Ivan Vazov (1850–1921), Aleko Konstantinov (1863–1897), Elin Pelin (1877–1949), Jordan Jovkov (1880–1937), Čudomir (1890–1967) and Jordan Radičkov (1929–2004). As time passes by, their use is increasingly limited to contexts in which they express mock seriousness. This is probably why the first-person forms are especially popular. See for example (11):

- (11) Истина е, че България е отечество на всички ни, но си мисля, че наред с това всеки човек има и едно малко отечество: това е родното място, къщата, от чийто праг за първи път е погледнал света, дворът с чисто пране по тела, мама, която събира привечер прането, а моя милост се държи за полата ѝ и гледа с любопитни очи съседните къщи, бялата кариера зад къщата, Балкана зад кариерата и слуша човешки гласове, кучешки лай, камбаната на старата часовникова кула. (Йордан Радичков, “Малко отечество”) ‘It is true that Bulgaria is the homeland of all of us but I think that everyone also has a small homeland: this is the native place, the house from the threshold of which one has first looked at the world, the courtyard with the clean laundry on the clothes-line, mummy who is folding the laundry at dusk while your humble servant holds her by the skirt, curiously surveying the neighbouring houses, the white quarry behind the house, the mountain behind the quarry, and listening to human voices, dogs barking and the bell of the old clock tower.’

The translation of *моя милост* (lit. ‘my grace’) as ‘your humble servant’, which works on one level because it renders a habitual circumlocution in one

¹⁶ This honorific is also reported from Poland since the same fifteenth century (Helmbrecht 2006, 441). It is known to Czech, Slovak, Serbian and Croatian (БЕР 3, 785) as well as to Russian.

language with a habitual circumlocution in another, completely misrepresents the rank that the speaker mockingly assigns to himself.

Such honorifics, especially in the second person but also in the third, can also be meant seriously as in a recording of Bulgarian dialect speech from Romania (made in 1968), where the informant addresses the interviewers with *ваша милост* as shown in example (12):

- (12) ичумик вѣрвам че и *ваша милост* му дѹмате| сѣ ичумик|| (ММЕС-BDR, Brebeni [Județul Olt] I: 77) 'Barley. I think that your grace also call it barley.'

The metonymic honorifics with *господство* are much more frequent in the damaskins than those with *милост*. They have been attested at least since the end of the fourteenth century (Djamo-Diaconița 1971, 181). They surface as polite address forms in Early Modern Bulgarian usage in the seventeenth century – cf. above (2) – and persist through the eighteenth¹⁷ and nineteenth¹⁸ centuries. However already Penčo Slavejkov (1866–1912) can only use *господство* ironically, which corroborates the stylistic information put forward by Pericle Papahagi (Papahagi 1908, No. 190).¹⁹ In other words, by the beginning of the twentieth century *господство* was already obsolescent as a neutral term of polite address. Younger speakers of Bulgarian are unfamiliar with the *господство*-based honorifics. We can thus see that the path of *господство* prefigures the evolution awaiting *милост*: from stylistically neutral common use as a full-fledged honorific term through a gradual restriction to ironic contexts to complete loss.

The Bulgarian metonymic honorific with *господство* appears to be a calque after the Greek honorific with *αὐθεντία*. The isomorphic Greek terms in the second and third person are in broad use in the colloquial language and the

¹⁷ For instance, in the writings of Josif Bradati (1682/3–1757): *мало нещо хощ¹ да скаж¹ на вашето господство* 'I want to say one little thing to your lordship' (NBKM manuscript 1058, 250^v – Стоянов и Кодов 1964, 331) and the Early Modern Bulgarian Svištov damaskin (Милетич 1923, 271, 272).

¹⁸ Employed by Georgi Sava Rakovski (1821–1867), Petko Slavejkov (1827–1895), Dobri Vojnikov (1833–1878), Vasil Popovič (1833–1897), Zahari Stojanov (1850–1899) and Ivan Vazov (1850–1921), among others.

¹⁹ There are reasons to believe that this statement leans on oral communication from the Bulgarian linguist Stojan Romanski (1882–1959) who was in residence in Leipzig during P. Papahagi's graduate studies.

dialects. The first-person is currently only used in self-mock (IANE 1933–1989, 3, 324). Writing around the turn of the century, Albert Thumb noted that V pronouns were only employed in cities and by the educated elite, being otherwise replaced by formulas that include *ἡ ἀφεντιά σου* and *ἡ εὐγενεία σου* (Thumb 1910, 82–83). The earliest evidence of the *αὐθεντία*-based formulas in Greek comes from the famous Byzantine epic poem *Digenis Akritis* (dated back to the eleventh or the twelfth centuries – Κριαράς 1968–1998, 3, 336–337). However, metonymic honorifics based on various abstracts pervade Greek usage since the fourth century AD (Ziliacus 1950, 44).

The Greek *αὐθεντία*-honorific was borrowed in Aromanian *afindilă-ț* where it is employed only exceptionally to strangers of high rank (Caragiu-Marioțeanu 1958, 98–99). Precise equivalents in the second and third person such as *твоје господарство, ваше господарство, његово господарство, њихово господарство* (RSKNJ 3, 513) are used both by Croatian and Serbian authors in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries: August Šenoa (1838–1881), Ksaver Gjalski-Šandor (1854–1935), Ante Kovačić (1854–1889), Vjenceslav Novak (1859–1905); Stojan Novaković (1842–1915), Ljubomir Nedić (1858–1902). Albanian is reported to possess formulas of the same structure: *zotërotë, zotëria-jotë* (Papahagi 1908, No. 190), *Zotnija Jote, Zotnija Juej* (Mann 1948, 584) etc. A recent dictionary defines *zotrote* as a colloquial 'term of respectful address for an elderly person of substance' or as an ironic 'derisive term directed at someone putting on airs; big shot' (Newmark 1999, 969). And, most importantly, Romanian also uses a polite formula of the same structure.

In Romanian the metonymic honorifics with *domnie* were grammaticalized as pronouns of politeness in the second and third person: *domnia tá > dumneată* [2SG], *domnia voastră > dumneavoastră* [2PL], *domnia lui > dumnealui* [3SG-MASC], *domnia ei > dumneaei* [3SG-FEM] and *domnia lór > dumnealór* [3PL].²⁰ Their employment was studied in detail by Fredrike Braun (1984) and compared to other Romance languages by Alexandru Niculescu (1965). Thus, Romanian provides a link between noun phrases and pronouns, demonstrating that all politeness phenomena are interconnected and should be studied comprehensively. Transforming its traditional honorifics into pronouns of politeness, Romanian has limited their use to the second and the third person

²⁰ I conclude that Romanian (as opposed to the other Balkan languages) features grammaticalization because the Romanian honorific, having undergone fusion, has become part of the pronominal system although its Spanish counterpart *vuestra merced* 'your honour' > *Usted* 'you (formal)' has been treated as an instance of lexicalization (Brinton and Traugott 2005, 50).

and superimposed on them the "standard average European" opposition between focus and spectrum (Strategy A presented in Table 2). A seventeenth-century record that translates *Bine venit domnata* and *Bine am | găsit pre| domne vestre* into Latin as 'Bene veniat dominatio tua' and 'Bene inventa dominatio tua' (Mihăilă 1979: 31 – Ioannes Luscus, *De Vlahiis*, 1668, 285) can be viewed as an early sign that, by that time, the two strategies were already brought together.

The result is a three-level contrast in the second person well-established by the nineteenth century (Niculescu 1965, 43) – T pronoun *tu* vs. V pronouns *dumneata* (a non-reciprocal politeness form to inferiors and a reciprocal form between equals) vs. *dumneavoastră* (a non-reciprocal politeness form to superiors and a reciprocal form between equals) – and two-level contrasts in the third person – *el* vs. *dumnealui* 'he', *ea* vs. *dumneaei* 'she' and *eile* vs. *dumnealor* 'they'. In reciprocal usage *dumneata* signals a shorter horizontal distance than *dumneavoastră*. Vertical distance is denoted by asymmetric *dumneata* – *dumneavoastră* use. Romanian differs in a significant respect from the other Balkan languages that historically have used similar formulas: there is nothing ironic or sarcastic about their use in contemporary Romanian.

Prior to the establishment of the strict *domnie*-based honorific system, Romanian honorifics were used in the same way as their Balkan counterparts, cf. for instance (13). Speakers of contemporary Romanian cannot switch between forms of *tu* and *dumneata* to refer to the same person. To be consistent, in this sentence they would have had to choose between *înaintea dumatle* & *dumneata* or *înaintea ta* & *tu*.

- (13) *Pentr-acea l-am adus înaintea ta, Dumneata veri face cu nus cum învață leagea și împărații* (Varlaam 1643, 61^v – Neagu 1991, 370) 'For that reason I brought him [St. Theodore Tiron] in front of you, your lordship will deal with him according to the teaching of the law and the emperors.'

Along with the *domnie*-based honorifics, Romanian also has others that were not included into the pronominal paradigm and are precise counterparts to Greek and Bulgarian metonymic honorifics (some mentioned above), cf. *măria ta* 'your majesty', *sfinția lui* 'his holiness', *înălțimea lor* 'their highness' etc. Offering abundant but inconsistent examples of V-pronouns side by side with varied honorifics – such as το ὑποχ της, η υψηλότης σας, η εκλαμπρότης σας, η ευγενεία σας (Brad Chisakof 2003, 220, 236, 270, 436) – the eighteenth-century Greek-language literature from the Romanian principalities provides a taste of

the usage in a bilingual setting that surrounded the grammaticalization of the Romanian *domnie*-based honorifics as pronouns of politeness.

A noteworthy difference between the Bulgarian forms and their Balkan counterparts (a characteristic that Bulgarian understandably shares with other South Slavic languages) is that – contrary to expectations – the Bulgarian honorific formulas do not feature the definite article. This is consistent with their long history during the pre-article stage that carried over by the force of tradition. In other words, their lexicalization pre-dates the rise of the definite article with situationally unique referents.²¹ Otherwise, we would have had **неговото господство* and **твоята милост*.

Table 4.

Linguistic expression of status and politeness in traditional society

	Positive Politeness	Status
Conventional formulas	+	+
Indirectness	–	–
Pronouns	–	–
Verbal endings	–	–
Noun phrases in referential use	+	+
Address forms	+	+
Vocative particles	+	+

Table 4 shows the linguistic arsenal of positive politeness and status during the traditional phase. Note that the same types of linguistic devices could express both status and positive politeness. If we compare positive politeness across periods (see Table 1), we will see that it has acquired during the modern phase new linguistic expression under the influence of its modern-age counterpart: negative politeness. In other words, 'positive politeness' in the traditional period linguistically differs from 'positive politeness' in the modern period. I am convinced that it also differs in its essence, being naïve and non-reflexive as it encompasses all social interactions of a person, regardless of status differences. Its opposite is rudeness. In the modern period, with the arrival of the third component – negative politeness – the sphere of application of positive politeness has been narrowed down. The choice between positive and negative politeness is not automatic and it depends to some extent on individuals inside the range of variation acceptable to the society of which they are part.

Metonymic honorifics are a type of conventional formulas that belong to the general area of positive politeness although they express status. The logic

²¹ Regarding the relative chronology of this process see Mladenova 2007, 184–194.

behind their use is reflected in the Bulgarian proverb: *Кажу ми аго да ми стане* *празо* 'Call him *agha*²² to make him happy'. In other words, assigning a high-rank term to one's interlocutor (a typical positive politeness approach) can never hurt even if that person's status is in fact not high. It is even more important to acknowledge actual high status as appropriate. This politeness strategy – dubbed here Strategy B (see Table 5) – is in stark contrast to the previous one. It is a remnant from the era preceding negative politeness and, as far as I know, is currently not represented anywhere on its own. By highlighting one aspect of a person – their 'holiness', 'sovereignty', 'highness', 'grace', 'lordship' etc. – such formulas bring this aspect of the referent into focus. It can be argued that the result is an even more 'focused' focus than that of T pronouns.

Pronouns of politeness and conventional formulas

Table 5.

Strategy B 'focus strengthened': metonymic formulas in the 2nd and 3rd person

In this context, the use of the third-person pronouns singular (Strategy C shown in Table 6), argued to be the elliptic use of titles like the German *Herr* and *Dame* or the Polish *pan* and *pani* (Helmbrecht 2006, 433), can also be seen as being initially a conventional formula in the realm of positive politeness.²³ Employed in conjunction with Strategy A, Strategy C produces the well-known German state of affairs with the use of third-person plural *Sie* as a pronoun of politeness. Its manifestations in the history of Russian deserve further attention.

Table 6.

Pronouns of politeness between conventional formulas and indirectness

Strategy C 'focus ellipted': [T PRONOUN] = focus [3RD PERSON SG] = elliptic title

Western and Eastern Europe feature different interactions of Strategy A with Strategies B and C. In the West, Strategy A preceded chronologically Strategies B and C (Helmbrecht 2006, 436–440). In the East, Strategy B was the first to appear on the historical stage and only later it was modified through the

²² This was a title of respect in the Ottoman Empire.

²³ The use of formerly third-person Japanese *anata* as a second-person politeness pronoun is however said to exploit deictic distance to express politeness (Traugott and Dasher 2002, 230), which would make it an instance of an indirectness-based strategy like Strategy A.

expansion of Strategy A. The intricacies of Strategy C (which is alien to the Balkans)²⁴ remain outside the scope of this article.

The Bulgarian and Romanian paths from their traditional to their modern politeness conventions are different and so are the resulting pronouns of politeness. Starting with very similar metonymic honorifics, they chose to deal with them differently under the impact of Europeanization. Bulgarian calqued the 'standard average European' Strategy A and reduced its old honorifics to peripheral ironic usage. I will call this approach a **revolutionary** path of development. Romanian transformed its honorifics into terms of politeness so that the earlier established Strategy B was modified under the influence of the newly imported Strategy A. Romanian repeated the West European evolution using its own linguistic material. This path can be called an **evolutionary** path of development.²⁵ One can argue that the acquisition of pronouns of politeness in any language that previously had honorifics must follow one of these two alternative paths. Languages in which honorifics were better rooted have higher chances to adjust them to the needs of negative politeness.

The situation in the Balkan languages clearly demonstrated the importance of Byzantine models for the formation of honorifics. The compilers of Bulgarian *damaskins* are on shaky grounds in the use of honorifics. They freely replace one

²⁴ Rarely, and presumably under the influence of West European models, third-person *господинът* 'the gentleman' or *госпожата* 'the gentlewoman' can be used in Bulgarian as the equivalent of the V pronoun in a way reminiscent of Strategy C in its incipient stage, cf.: И както обикновено се случва между съвсем нови хазаи и наематели, жената и непознатият почувстваха особено предразположение един към друг. Не желае ли господинът едно сладко? Господинът сви рамене и примигна някак смутено, но все пак изведе сладкото, разгледа и портрета на сина от Детройт и предплати стаята (Светослав Минков, "Разказ за една бегония"). 'And as it usually happens between recent landlords and tenants, the woman and the stranger felt distinct mutual sympathy. Would the gentleman like to have a serving of fruit preserve? The gentleman shrugged his shoulders and winked in slight embarrassment but nevertheless ate the preserve, examined the portrait of the son residing in Detroit and prepaid the rent.' Here *Не желае* [3SG] *ли* *господинът* [SUBJECT] *едно сладко* stands for *Не желае ли едно сладко, господине* [VOCATIVE]. This usage, perceived today as archaic or pompous (see also Мурдаров s.a.), was never grammaticalized.

²⁵ Only Romanian speakers in Northern Bulgaria have deviated from this path. Under the influence of their Bulgarian-speaking environment, they opted for Strategy A (Nestorescu 1968). The choice of politeness strategy by this minority group, which migrated south of the Danube River during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, corroborates the fairly recent chronology of the institutionalization of the Romanian politeness pronouns. It is interesting that while the bilingual Bulgarian minority in Romania preserves the traditional state of affairs – see illustration (12) – and exhibits no influence from standard or colloquial Romanian in this regard, the bilingual Romanian minority in Bulgaria embraces the politeness pronouns promoted by Standard Bulgarian.

term with another because fine status distinctions are unimportant to them. During the Ottoman period Bulgarians, forming a relatively homogenous group of low status, could never use their own language to address those in power. Since interaction with high-status persons took place in another language, the existing Bulgarian honorifics were not in active use. Wallachia and Moldavia, on the other hand, had their hierarchical structures that after the demise of Slavic-Romanian bilingualism had to be accommodated exclusively in Romanian (or alternatively in Greek), a situation that lasted for at least three centuries. This explanation, however valid for the Romanian and Bulgarian developments, is probably insufficient to explain the preference for an evolutionary or a revolutionary adaptation of the imported West European models in general. This is so because, given the importance of Greek for shaping the pre-modern norms of interaction in the Balkans, it remains unclear why Greek itself should also take the revolutionary route. Rather than generalize across cultures the Bulgarian and Romanian reasons for opting one way or the other, one should search in every individual case for the specific preconditions that made a certain option more appealing to insiders.



Map 1
 Source: Helmbrecht
 2006, 439

In his study of the typology of the pronouns of politeness Johannes Helmbrecht (2006) reaches the conclusion that the pronouns of politeness are one of the characteristics of the European *Sprachbund* (or Standard Average European), which had as its centre of innovation the territory of France and Germany and has, because of that, been also called Charlemagne *Sprachbund*. I have reproduced his map that shows the distribution of the various pronouns of politeness according to origin and is supposed to reflect synchronic as well as diachronic data (see Map 1).

My research reported in this article shows that historically the Balkan Peninsula is far from the unitary front that it presents on this map. In fact, viewed from the Balkans, Europe looks like the battleground of two tendencies (see Map 2 compiled on the basis of Helmbrecht's data supplemented and reinterpreted): one coming from the west (Strategy A) and the other from the southeast of Europe (Strategies B and C). The dotted line of Strategy A encompasses entire Europe whereas the hatching of Strategies B and C predominates in the European South and East.



Map 2. Interaction of indirectness (Strategy A) with conventional formulas (Strategies B and C)

On a general balkanological plane, the study of the relationship of politeness and status highlighted the need to reevaluate the boundaries of Balkan studies as a discipline. Like all balkanologists, I have always taken it for granted that all Balkan nations and their languages have experienced a transition from a traditional to a modern period. Our interest in the peculiarities that Balkan languages share automatically brings to the foreground the traditional period. Conversely, scholars of the individual Balkan cultures and languages usually study without reference to balkanology the details of the gradual abandonment of the common Balkan heritage in favour of a national culture rooted in the national language and oriented towards Europe.²⁶ It is high time that we also recognize the study of the transition from traditional to modern society as a legitimate balkanological domain.

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²⁶ I can cite here the extremely interesting work by the Romanist Alexandru Niculescu, who talks about 'the westernization of Romanian language and culture' (Niculescu 1978).

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Key words: politeness, status, identity, indirectness, personal pronouns, honorifics, grammaticalization, lexicalization, multilingualism, Balkan languages

Abstract

This article studies the evolution of politeness in Balkan societies during their traditional and modern periods and, more specifically, that of the pronouns of politeness in their relation to metonymic honorifics. It shows how metonymic honorifics, introduced under Byzantine influence, were eventually combined with pronouns of politeness, imported from Western Europe, or replaced by them. The Balkan data analysed in this article make it possible to demonstrate that the current European state of affairs was the outcome of the competition between two politeness strategies, one originating in the west and the other in the south of Europe.

Rezumat

Articolul urmărește modul în care exprimarea politeții prin pronume personale și formule onorifice evoluează în societățile balcanice de la perioada tradițională la cea modernă. Formulele onorifice, care au fost introduse sub influență bizantină, au fost fie înlocuite de pronume personale de politețe, importate din Europa apuseană, fie combinate cu ele. Datele balcanice analizate în acest articol demonstrează că situația europeană contemporană se datorează competiției între două strategii de politețe: una, provenind din apusul, iar cealaltă – din sudul Europei.