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**EFFECTS OF LANGUAGE CONTACT AS A SOURCE OF
(NON)INFORMATION: THE HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF
BURGENLAND KAJKAVIAN**

PETER HOUTZAGERS

1. Introduction

In the Austrian province of Burgenland and adjoining areas in Austria, Hungary and Slovakia there are approximately 80 villages where varieties of Croatian are spoken. The ancestors of this Croatian-speaking population for the most part settled there in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Their original dwelling-places were those parts of Croatia and Slavonia that at that period suffered from Ottoman attacks.

Most of the dialects spoken in and around the Burgenland belong to the Štokavian or Čakavian dialect group. Only in two villages a representative of the third main group of Serbo-Croatian, viz. Kajkavian, is spoken. These are Hideg-ség and Fertóhomok (henceforth "Hi" and "Fe"), two neighbouring villages in the northwest of Hungary, near Sopron.

Although there is no hard evidence, there are strong indications from historical sources that in the early sixteenth century the ancestors of the inhabitants of Hi and Fe came from the area between Kutina and Novska in the westernmost part of Slavonia, somewhat to the east of the territory where Kajkavian dialects are spoken nowadays.¹ Moreover, it is the only surviving Kajkavian dialect that was separated from its original surroundings as early as the sixteenth century. Therefore the dialect is of interest for the dialectology of Serbo-Croatian, especially for the reconstruction of the history of Kajkavian and of the dialect picture as it was before it was dramatically changed by the mass migrations on the Balkans.

The dialect of Hi and Fe has understandably received relatively large amount of attention in the literature on Kajkavian. The attention of the various authors was especially drawn by the lack of certain characteristics that all Kajkavian dialects are believed to have in common and by the question of the origin of the dialect. Unfortunately however, the available data was small. I myself have been interested in Hi and Fe since 1985, when I visited them for the first time. In view of

¹ Today Kajkavian is spoken in a relatively compact area around Zagreb, the southeast corner of which is west of Novska.

the rapid extinction of the dialect, I gave priority to gathering a more or less complete picture of it on the basis of my own field-work and I recently published a synchronic description (1999). I think that now the issue of the history of the dialect can be addressed on a more solid basis than before. In the following I shall give a survey of the relevant questions and the problems that occur in answering them. Some of these problems are caused by loss of information due to intensive contacts with other languages and dialects through a very long period.

2. Questions to be answered

There are several ways in which the dialect material from Hi and Fe is of potential interest for the reconstruction of Kajkavian. First, it can give us information about where Kajkavian was spoken before the migrations. If it is true that the dialect came from the area indicated above, it can contribute to our knowledge of southeasternmost Kajkavian as it was around 1500. This part of Kajkavian disappeared shortly afterwards, together with its Štokavian and Čakavian neighbours and the transitional dialects in between.²

Second, the Hi and Fe material can be of help in reconstructing the development of Kajkavian as a whole or even of a larger part of western South-Slavic. For example, the fact that the dialect does not share all characteristics that are usually considered common Kajkavian can tell us something about the course of some of the oldest isoglosses in this part of Slavic. One of these is the isogloss of the so-called "neo-circumflex", a long falling accent that occurs under specific circumstances on a vowel that was short and rising in Proto-Slavic. Another example: the east of the Kajkavian dialect area is renowned for its accentual innovations, such as stress shifts in both directions. The Hi and Fe dialect does not show evidence of such innovations. This could be due to its peripheral location within Kajkavian, but also to the chronology of the innovations.

It is clear that if we want to use the Hi and Fe material as a source of information in the sense described above, we need to answer two questions:

- 1) Where did the dialect come from?³
- 2) What did it look like before the migration?

² The Štokavian and Čakavian neighbours referred to were to the east and south, respectively. The type of Štokavian spoken there at that period is also called Šćakavian. On the boundary between "real" southeastern Kajkavian and transitional dialects see Lončarić 1995: 96-98.

³ It has often been suggested that the Hi and Fe dialect is the result of dialect mixture. (For a survey of the various opinions on the matter see Houtzagers 1999: 28-30). For methodological reasons, however, I prefer not to use the dialect mixture explanation (which can account for almost everything) until it is necessary to do so.

Ad 1

The historical indications on the provenance of the Hi and Fe people are not conclusive and, although the linguistic data do not seem to contradict the hypothesis of the West Slavonian origin of the dialect, all of it is far from sufficient.⁴ We could say a lot more if we had:

- a less defective synchronic picture of Kajkavian as a whole, especially of its easternmost varieties. It is imaginable that a small number of characteristics of Hi and Fe Kajkavian would suffice to determine its place on the dialect map. For instance, it would be very interesting to know more about the geographic distribution of *sèstra* 'sister' and *čèkat* 'wait' and of the pronoun *vānī* 'what-d'ye-call-it' (see Ivić 1990: 205, Houtzagers 1999: 25, 111-112).⁵ In *sèstra* and *čèkat* the vowel *e* is a non-etymological reflex of Proto-Slavic **ě/b*.⁶ The pronoun *vānī* is probably very rare. It is found neither in RHSJ 1880-1976, nor in Skok 1971-74, nor in the literature on the varieties of Croatian that surround Hi and Fe, but it is present in certain dialect descriptions (Fancev 1907 and Lončarić 1986).
- a better impression of the Hi and Fe dialect as it was before the migration, which amounts to the same thing as question (2) above.

Ad 2

In the reconstruction of the premigratory picture of the dialect an important role is played by hypotheses about language contacts:

- In the step-by-step reconstruction of parts of the system of the dialect, the moment when it came into contact with another language or dialect can be a *terminus ante quem* or *post quem*. For instance, in the development of the Hi and Fe vowel system there was a stage during which stressed long mid vowels developed from opening diphthongs to closing ones. In view of the phonetic realization of long mid vowels both in the Čakavian dialects and the variety of Hungarian that surround the dialect at its present location, it can be assumed that this process had been completed or was at least well on its way before the migration (see Houtzagers 1996: 127). On the other hand, the development of the unstressed vowels in Hi (not in Fe) suggests a strong influence from local Hungarian (see Houtzagers 1996: 132).

⁴ For a discussion on the provenance of the inhabitants of Hi and Fe see Houtzagers 1999: 20-25.

⁵ For technical reasons, the notation of the Hi and Fe vowels is somewhat different from the system used in Houtzagers 1999.

⁶ In Hi and Fe we would expect *ä* (< **e*).

- For a proper premigratory picture we must identify those elements that were borrowed from other languages and dialects after the migration. As we shall see in the following, this is not an easy task.

3. Effects of language contacts

The dialect of Hi and Fe is rich in traces of language contact. A distinction must be made between (i) contacts with Hungarian (henceforth sometimes abbreviated “Hu”) and (ii) contacts with other varieties of Croatian.⁷ Both have been there before as well as after the migration.

However strange it may seem at first sight, it is not always simple to distinguish between the effects of (i) and (ii) above, and especially the distinction between premigratory and postmigratory linguistic influences presents difficulties. This is because the circumstances of linguistic contacts before and after the migration have been – to a certain extent – similar. In both periods the dialect was influenced strongly by Hungarian. Moreover, if before the migration the dialect was spoken in the south-east corner of Kajkavian, it probably had some of the same Štokavian and Čakavian neighbours it has now.

Another complicating factor is the fact that the borrowing relationships involved more than two parties, operated in several directions and lasted for a very long period of time. It is well-known that Hungarian at an earlier stage had borrowed a large number of words from Slavic. In the centuries preceding the migration, Croatian dialects spoken in Croatia and Slavonia – especially the Kajkavian ones – were strongly influenced by Hungarian (the language of the rulers) and non-Kajkavian dialects were influenced by Kajkavian, which also had a literary language. As a consequence, the non-Kajkavian Burgenland dialects also show a number of Kajkavian characteristics and those Burgenland dialects that are not spoken in Hungary also contain a number of Hungarian loan-words. After the migration, the northernmost Čakavian Burgenland dialects were sociolinguistically dominant and formed the basis for the development of a Burgenland Croatian literary language which, also through the church and the school, had a strong linguistic influence.⁸

⁷ In contradistinction to most other Burgenland dialects, the influence of German was not great (see Houtzagers 1999: 28).

⁸ Here are the most important sources on the matters discussed here. For a general outline of Burgenland Croatian see Neweklowsky 1978. On Hu influences on Serbo-Croatian see Hadrovics 1985. There are a number of old Kajkavian glossaries, the most famous of which are Belosztenez 1740 (written for the most part in the 17th century) and Habledić 1670. For a survey see Jonke 1949. Very important in this connection is Finka 1984-. For linguistic information from old Burgenland texts see Hadrovics 1974 and Nyomárkay 1996. On Kajkavian in general see Ivšić 1936 and Lončarić 1996. Synchronic Burgenland glossaries can be found in Koschat 1978, Hamm et al. 1982, Neweklowsky 1989, Tornow 1989, Finka et al. 1991 and Houtzagers 1999. Valuable

4. Hungarian elements

The most dramatic consequence of the contact with Hungarian for Hi and Fe Croatian is that, especially in the last few decades, the latter has rapidly retreated in favour of the former. Within the scope of this paper, however, we shall only be interested in those effects of language contact that influenced the dialect internally.⁹ As may be expected, the dialect abounds in Hungarian loan-words. A few examples: *ajandika* ‘gift’ (acc. sing., Hu *ajándék*), *lävägê* ‘air’ (Hu *levegő*). However, Hungarian also influenced the dialect in phonetic and syntactic respects. Examples: the phonetic realization of the low front vowel (*ä*) and, in Hi, the realization of long and short *a* is identical to that of the vowels that occupy comparable positions in the surrounding variety of Hungarian (*e, á, a*). Also the sentence intonation is very similar to that of Hungarian. The typically Hungarian use of antecedents before object sentences (e.g. *azt¹ mondja², hogy³ ... ‘he² says² [it]¹, that³ ...’* is also present in Hi and Fe Croatian: *tò¹ su² mu³ guvòrili⁴, nàka⁵ idà⁶ dumòm⁷ ‘they² told⁴ him³ [it]¹ that⁵ he⁶ should⁶ go⁶ home⁷’.*

Distinguishing between premigratory and postmigratory effects of Hungarian influence is problematic. Also it is not easy to recognize whether one has to do with direct loans from Hungarian or with originally Hungarian words borrowed from other Croatian dialects. Diachronic phonology is seldom of any help. For instance, the root of the word *bätäžän* ‘sick’ (Hu *beteg* ‘illness’) could in principle have been borrowed and extended with the suffix *-än* at any period. Abundant attestation in Kajkavian sources suggests that it is an old loan from Hungarian (Hadrovics 1985: 143-145). On the other hand, it is also omnipresent in non-Kajkavian Burgenland Croatian and could have originated from there. This possibility is illustrated by the spread of such words as *hasnovat* ‘use’ (from Hu *haszon*), which is quite common in Burgenland Croatian but not used in Hi and Fe.

When diachronic phonology does provide a clue, it is usually not more than that. For instance, the word *bíruš* ‘employee of the count’ (Hi/Fe meaning) at first glance looks like an old loan: the suffix *-us* is an Old Hungarian predecessor of *-os* from before the lowering of *u* to *o*. Also, the word is well attested in old Kajkavian sources. However, the word is as popular in Burgenland Croatian as the word *bätäžän* that we just discussed. The substantive *bätäkšiga* ‘(gen. sing.) illness’ (Hu *betegség*) is not as wide-spread in the Burgenland and reminds one of an older stage of Hungarian (before the lowering of *i* to *e*), but on the other hand *i*

sources of information are also Skok 1971-1974 and RHSJ 1880-1976, although in the latter Kajkavian is under-represented.

⁹ Other effects of the contact with Hu that will not be discussed here are (a) those instances of variability and uncertainty in the linguistic competence of the speakers that are symptoms of the process of dialect death; (b) spontaneous borrowing from Hu as a consequence of the fact that all speakers of the dialect are bilingual.

is very often the regular vowel that in Hi and Fe corresponds with Hu *é*, also in loans that are probably not old, such as *sätäminja* 'acc. sing.) pastry' and *ädinjä* 'plates and dishes' from Hu *sütemény* and *edény*.¹⁰ Of course there are evidently new borrowings, such as *räpülê* 'airplane' (Hu *repülő*), but for most Hu loans little can be said as to when and how they penetrated into Hi and Fe Croatian.

5. Influences from other varieties of Burgenland Croatian

Burgenland Croatian dialects show a lot of linguistic variety, which can be explained by their different places of origin prior to the migrations. Yet there are a considerable number of similarities. Neweklowsky (1969: 99-101) mentions 13 main "Burgenland croaticisms", i.e. characteristics that all or most Burgenland dialects have in common.¹¹ One of these consists of a large number of common lexical items, most of which are also found in Hi and Fe. In spite of its being the only Kajkavian dialect within Burgenland Croatian, the Hi and Fe dialect possesses only a small number of lexical items that it does not share with one or more other Burgenland dialects. The other 12 Burgenland croaticisms concern morphology and (synchronic and diachronic) phonology. Eight of them also apply (at least in part) to Hi and Fe. Examples: (a) the sandhi rule that makes voiceless obstruents voiced even before nondistinctively voiced phonemes (i.e. resonants and vowels), e.g. *tò jä vidit üš* 'that remains to be seen' → [vididüš], *nämram zäbit mujêga sîna* 'I can't forget my son' → [zäbidmujêga]; (b) the conditional auxiliary *bi* for every person in singular and plural; (c) the indeclinable possessive pronoun meaning 'her' (*njê* in Hi and Fe, similar forms elsewhere); (d) the genitive plural ending *-ov*, not only for masculine but often also for feminine nouns.

There is evidence that the other Burgenland dialects, especially those belonging to the three northernmost Čakavian groups, have influenced the Hi and Fe dialect from at least the 17th century till the present day (see Houtzagers 1999: 25-27). It seems to be clear that since the migration the Hi and Fe dialect has in principle been the "receiving" party in borrowing relationships.¹² Although some varieties of Burgenland Croatian were in all probability already neighbours before the migration, the common characteristics discussed here are so numerous and so wide-spread that we can safely assume that the majority of them penetrated the Hi and Fe dialect only after the migration. On the other hand, it is almost certain that some of them were already present: many lexical items that are common for Burgenland Croatian occur in the oldest Kajkavian glossaries (cf. Neweklowsky

1982: 262-263).¹³ The uncertainty about the distinction between premigratory and postmigratory linguistic influences remains.

6. Conclusion

In the above I have tried to show that for the moment many questions concerning the provenance and development of the Hi and Fe dialect must remain unanswered. The effects of language contacts do not contribute very much and one could even say that they caused the loss of much valuable information: the elements borrowed from other languages and dialects are not only of little help in the reconstruction, they also have taken the place of characteristics that kajkavologists would have been very interested in. I think, however, that we can end our account with a positive note. Part of the unclarity must be ascribed to our present state of knowledge in two fields that very much deserve to be studied in their own right. Progress in these domains will almost certainly contribute to the solution of the problems discussed here. I am referring to:

- the synchronic description of Kajkavian, especially its easternmost dialects;
- comparative analysis of Burgenland Croatian, also in contrast with the available synchronic and old data on Kajkavian.

There are already a number of reasonable hypotheses about the premigratory location of the various dialect groups within Burgenland Croatian (cf. Ivšić 1971: maps after page 798, Neweklowsky 1978: 264-281). Detailed study of the spread of every relevant characteristic will certainly bring more light into the matter.

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¹⁰ My assumption that these loans are not old is based on their meaning and on the fact that I did not find any attestations in the Burgenland Croatian and old Kajkavian sources that I checked. This assumption may be wrong.

¹¹ Of course, characteristics that are common Serbo-Croatian or otherwise shared by larger groups of Serbo-Croatian dialects are not included.

¹² Of course it is also possible that some of the shared elements are results of common innovations.

¹³ There is one easily identifiable group of borrowings from surrounding Čakavian dialects. It is very small and consists of words that are clearly non-Kajkavian (in terms of reflexes of Proto-Slavic vowels) and appear only in Hi, which is geographically nearer to Čakavian than Fe. Examples: *lîp* 'beautiful' (Fe *lêp*), *ubîsit* 'hang up' (Fe *obêsit*; see also Houtzagers 1996: 121-123).

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