An Attempt at a Short History of the MacedonianLiteraryLanguage from the Point of View of the "Role of the Individual"

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1. Foreword

1.1. Thus far in my research, I have mainly focused on South Slavic languages like Serbian,Croatian and Macedonian, and especially the relationship between their various dialects and the standard language. With the exception of Slovenians, the national groups comprising the former Yugoslavia all reached an important point in their history in establishing a standardised national language after the middle of the 19th century. Macedonian first appeared as a fledgling independent language even more recently - at the end of the 2nd World War. As most readers will be no doubt aware, in the last couple of decades or so there has been a resurgence of nationalism in the Balkans and new languages have emerged on an ethnic and territorial basis. These are all very closely related South Slavic languages which exhibit relatively minor dialectal differences or at least this is how the situation might look to people in this country thinking of the relationship between, say, the dialects of Okinawa and standard Japanese.

The dynamics of the birth of a "new language" under such circumstances are therefore difficult to imagine from a Japanese point of view, as is the case with the deliberate policy of Croatia to differentiate its standard language from Serbian. Attempts to set such very similar languages apart may look artificial and contrived from the outside, but it is reasonably possible that linguistic divergence will indeed become a reality as a result of the efforts of the state and various intellectual groups, as well as popular support. It can be said that Croatia is in the midst of such intentional linguistic transformation.

1.2. If we look at the process which led to the establishment of Serbo-Croatian in the first place, we can see that the very forces pushing towards a linguistic split between Serbians and Croatians at the end of the 20th century had actually brought them together in the previous one. At that time, the Serbian and Croatian peoples were ruled by two different powers - the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian Empires respectively; they were both influenced

by Western ideas entering the age of Nationalism. Inspired by the prospect of national independence and facing two great empires which they had to fight to win it from, Serbs and Croats were unified by their common Slavic origins. Of course, we cannot imagine that they were oblivious of the cultural and historical divides between them, but the fact that they did not possess independent literary languages had preserved their basic linguistic unity and this factor took precedence over other differences as a powerful and consolidating force in their joint struggle.

"Sameness" and "difference" are two very subtle and elusive concepts in this geographic region; the linguistic unity of Serbs and Croats, particularly emphasised at a time when their vernaculars were not backed by much political power, was also a relative thing. However, it had some very influential proponents. The great Vuk Karadzic, a self-educated scholar with a passion about language was one such advocate of integrity based on language. Serbo-Croatian became one of the cornerstones of these two peoples' political unification under the single state of Yugoslavia, but this unification would not have been possible without the efforts of powerful figures who "overcame all obstacles in the name of the common goal".

The former Yugoslavia was a complex combination of various ideals and contradictions and the language called Serbo-Croatian was perhaps what it was built around more than anything else. At the same time, the vital role that various talented individuals played in putting the various disagreements and unresolved problems on hold and striving towards a big common ideal is undeniable. These individuals have often been described as possessing rare abilities and titanic energy while remaining quite down-to-earth and human; they were simultaneously idols and fallible beings. Yugoslavia was held together by just such a personality - Tito.

1.3. Independent Macedonia is another state that has in recent times emerged out of the former South-Slavic federation, and here I would like to retrace the establishment of this country's literary language from the point of view of "the power of the individual". In the past, I have had the opportunity to try and sketch the historical role of a few eminent Macedonian figures, but in this paper I will attempt to re-examine the lives of two important individuals in the history of literary Macedonian from this new perspective. I will also try to draw some parallels with the situation in Japan, which is regarded as radically unlike that of Balkan countries. The great difference between ours and their experience was a very big part of the reason why I became interested in the Macedonian language in the first place, and I hope that in comparing the two, we can gain a more lucid picture of the peculiar linguistic situation in the Balkans. I have previously published articles which examine the lives of these two historic figures and I would like to refer the reader to them as well, even though some points may be repeated here[1].

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1 Nakajima 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1996, 2000

2. From songs to poems: Konstantin Miladinov

2.1. Konstantin Miladinov is regarded to be the first poet of Macedonia. There were others before him, of course, but he is widely considered to be the first to produce works of "high artistic value" in the local vernacular. How did that come to be?

Konstantin was born in 1830 in the town of Struga, lying on the side of Lake Ohrid. His father, who did not live to see him, was a poor craftsman but a man eager to provide education for his children. The oldest son in the family, Dimitar, became a teacher and later supported the whole household; he was more like a father to Konstantin and even taught him for a period of time. The younger Miladinov respected his older brother and was greatly influenced by him.

Dimitar Miladinov is known as an early teacher of nationalist convictions. He was a teacher of Greek, but in 1856, when travelling with a clergyman to Herzegovina, Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, he was impressed with the efforts undertaken there by other Slavs to organise a system of education in their local vernaculars. An earlier encounter with the Russian philologist and Slavonic scholar Viktor Grigorovich had also greatly influenced him. Grigorovich, aiming to strengthen the influence of Russia and the Orthodox Church on the Balkans travelled extensively in the region between 1844 and 1847, actively engaging local teachers and intellectuals[2]. He spent a few months in Ohrid and Struga, and visited Miladinov's mother to hear some local songs. Grigorovich encouraged Dimitar to start gathering folk songs and to study the dialect of Struga. At that time, Russia was a respected "big brother" in the eyes of the small and oppressed peoples of Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria who looked to it for hope and support under foreign rule. It is said that the otherwise stubborn and temperamental Dimitar Miladinov had great faith in Russia - to the point of naivety.

Konstantin was of a more quiet and scholarly nature than Dimitar, but it was the latter's zealous faith in the "big brother" influenced his decision to go to Russia. Inspired by Grigorovich, Dimitar dreamed of writing a grammar for his mother-tongue and having failed to fulfil his dream, he was entrusting to his little brother the task of studying Slavic philology. He had instead directed his energies towards resisting the domination of Greek and collecting oral folklore and songs. Dimitar's dream of literary independence later brought upon him and his beloved sibling fatal imprisonment, but his passion for folklore has bequeathed us a compilation that Macedonia is proud of - *Zbornik za narodni umotvorbi* ("The Collection of Folk Songs, Riddles and Costumes"), published in Zagreb in 1861[3].

2.2. Having first graduated from the Ioannina Gymnasium (Greece) and then from the

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2 See *Ocherk puteshestvija po Evropejskoj Turcii*, Москва (1877) about Viktor Grigorovich's Balkan travels; Dimitar Miladinov mentions his 1845 meeting with Grigorovich in a letter written by him in Greek in 1846 (Polenakovik' 1984).

3 The book was originally published as "Collection of Bulgarian Folk Songs". In this article, I have cited the collection's title as it appears in present-day Macedonia.

Department of Philosophy at the University of Athens, Konstantin set out for Russia in the autumn of 1857, carrying and sharing his brother's hopes. He was supposed to immerse himself deep in Slavologic studies at the University of Moscow, but what awaited him was the harsh Russian winter and extreme deprivation. Having come from a faraway corner of the Balkans with high hopes and a sense of mission, the 27-year-old was not able to procure sufficient assistance in the country his brother so fervently trusted and, his health damaged, had to leave Moscow during his third year there. Editing Dimitar's compilation and trying to find a way of publishing it helped Konstantin get through this hard period, but the brothers' dreams of seeing it printed in Russia remained unrealised. On the other hand, it was during those three years of hardship that he was inspired to put pen to paper and give vent to his suffering and longing for the homeland. This is how one of the most beautiful Macedonian poems was born. *T'ga za jug* ("Longing for the South") is still loved to this day[4]:

> *Had I the wings of an eagle I'd soar*
> *and fly to our motherland's shores,*
> *to the place which we call home -*
> *Stambol, Kukush and beyond.*
> *Is the sunshine there as stark*
> *as hither in this land of dark?*
>
> *If, like here, I were to behold*
> *a sun so dim, gloomy and cold*
> *still farther away then will I flee*
> *to new shores and lands, so as to be*
> *where bright is the sun and where at night*
> *the sky with a million stars is alight.*

Konstantin left Moscow and met Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Vienna. Strossmayer was a patron of Slavic culture and helped Miladinov publish the Collection of Folk Songs at long last (the book was printed in Zagreb)[5]. Konstantin went to Belgrade later, but news reached him there that his brother had been arrested and sent to Istanbul; he changed his plans of returning home and instead went straight to the Ottoman capital only to find himself jailed too. In 1862,

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4 Published in 1961 in the Belgrade newspaper "Dunavski Lebed". Only the first two (out of a total of six) verses are cited here in translation.

5 The manuscript of the collection was originally written using Greek letters. Konstantin Miladinov thought that this would make it more widely accepted at home, but this opinion was met with adamant opposition from Strossmayer. Consequently, it was eventually published in the Cyrillic alphabet (Polenakovik' 1994) Also, the Bulgarian folklorist Petar Dinekov writes that one reason for the Collection's failure to stir much interest in Russia was because it was written with Greek letters. (Petar Dinekov, Deloto na bratja Miladinovi, in New Edition of *Bulgarski narodni pesni,* 1961)

both Konstantin and Dimitar died of illness in prison.

2.3. Next, I would like to reflect on the significance of Konstantin Miladinov, whose works laid the beginnings of Macedonian poetry. In my opinion, the main reasons for his becoming the country's first great poet can be summarised in the following four points:

1. In putting together and organising the collection of folk songs with his brother, he was able to take in and directly feel the expressivity of his mother tongue.
2. This experience later helped him write with a rhythm deeply rooted in oral folklore.
3. His poor health, poverty and hard life in a foreign land gave him and his poetry a pungent and powerful character.
4. His tragic death after many trials and tribulations elevated him to the status of martyrdom in the popular mind.

First, allow me to expand on the first two of the above points. The simple but powerful energy that oral folklore possesses is based on the most primary asset of language - *sound.* Dimitar despaired in his futile attempts to write in his mother-tongue not only because he could not draw on an established orthographic tradition, but also because he had no literary model to follow. Greek was Konstantin's and Dimitar's literary medium and they could express themselves intellectually in this language of high prestige[6]. But if they wanted to describe their intimate emotions, they could only do so in the language of their everyday life, the language which gave shape to their inner feelings and existed only in the world of sound - their mother tongue. And it turned out that they had just the right model for that. That model was the songs people sang, of which there was one for most human emotions. Folk songs can lament, delight, praise, tease or despair through their verses, melody and rhythm.

Japanese people are well familiar with the distinction between *uta* (song) and *shi* (poem). *Uta* originally comes from chants spoken in the language of long ago that describe everyday emotions or natural scenes. That ancient form has been passed down the generations as classic literature for a millennium now; somewhere along the way the *chanting element was* lost but the *sound* did not disappear altogether. There are many relics of that sound, but one example is the *Hyakunin isshu* which is still remembered and recited to this day. Be it traditional *waka* anthologies, haiku poems from the Edo period or folk songs integral to village life, they all fall into our notion of *uta.*

In contrast, the word *shi* (poem) came to be used for Chinese poetry, the original sound of which was completely lost on Japanese soil and thus stopped being *uta.* Writing *shi* in Chinese

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6 Konstantin could also write in Russian fluently, although he could not speak it that well (Polena-kovik' 1994). His letters to Bulgarians were written in his own Struga dialect, with strong Russian influences.

was strictly male territory and this unique genre lived only through the written word, with authors trying to be ever more ingenious in playing with Chinese characters. Thus, the words *uta* and *shi* symbolize the state of diglossia in Japan that lasted right up to modern times.

The importance of Konstantin Miladinov's collecting, editing and writing down folk songs cannot be overestimated. If Konstantin was like his student from Ohrid, Grigor P'rlicev, and had only striven to write works of high poetic value in Greek (a language he was fluent and very well educated in), if he wasn't tormented by burning emotions and if he had never become acquainted with the oral culture of his people, perhaps he would never have had the opportunity to grapple with the problem of *sound* in his own language.

2.4. Thus far, I have tried to describe the gap between *sound* and *letters,* or between song and poem in the work of Konstantin Miladinov from a linguistic point of view. Research with a more literary bent could look at the ways Russian Romanticism influenced him during his stay in Moscow. However, I would like to focus on another facet of his contribution to the development of the Macedonian language - the special role of the individual called a *poet.* Points 3. and 4. which I have outlined in section 2.3. naturally come to the fore in this regard. They sum up the important role of Konstantin Miladinov and qualify him as a poet in the context of modern literature. Furthermore, I would like to make two related propositions:

1. Songs were originally of unknown authorship and existed as folklore, but now for the first time poems came to be associated with a remarkable and intense *individual* personality.
2. Though not particularly numerous, K.Miladinov's poems are remembered as the first to have given a *voice* to the sentiments of Macedonians, a voice which groans with the pain of suffering and cries with nostalgia in plain language and simple prosody.

It is said that when Vuk Karadžić's collection of folk songs and epic tales was introduced to Western Europe, it had a great impact at a time when *sound* was already largely lost from literature and replaced by the written word. Coupled with the Romanticist revival of interest in folk studies, the collection of Balkan folklore served to open Western eyes once again to the rich world of oral art. The belated establishment of a literary tradition in the Balkans meant that a purely oral culture was preserved much longer there. The folklore that Konstantin drew from was precisely what was missing in the West - a world of sounds that reflected people's everyday lives.

But folklore is not something that is associated with any particular individual. Folk songs are about universal feelings of joy and sorrow, about customs and rituals, nature, past events or legends (even if individual heroes may appear in them). Although folklore can be passed down through the talent of great singers or troubadours, it is not something that is ultimately born out of individual expression. Folklore is anonymous and it only has meaning when knowledge

of it is shared in a society.

The work of Konstantin exceeded this anonymous framework. It is true that feelings of nostalgia and suffering in a foreign country and climate may be a universal motif. Indeed, in the impoverished Balkans there were many people who looked for better fortune abroad and turned their experiences to song. But Konstantin's studies in faraway Moscow, the important mission and the great expectations he carried on his shoulders, and still more his tragic end, made him a remarkable *individual*. We could say that the message he sent home relating his unique experiences in the *sounds* of his mother-tongue gave Macedonians their first true poetry.

All the poems by Konstantin Miladinov were written abroad (at least in the form they are known today) - in Moscow or on the way back from there, in places like Vienna and Belgrade. His whole creative period lasted less than five years, but his works present a synthesis between the *sound* of folk songs and the expression of his *individuality.* Konstantin's sensitivity, sharpened during the time he fought illness and his efforts to give a *voice* to his feelings were undoubtedly what honed his poetic talent, and allowed him to create a whole new world by speaking the simple language of ordinary people.

2.5. When Western-European verse was first introduced to Japan, it naturally fell into the *shi* category of poetry. English, French and German works of poetry now took on the role that Classical Chinese had played in the centuries before. However, translation into Japanese was required this time; translators became the first conveyors of new strands of thought and gave rise to a new and highly-esteemed linguistic culture the symbol of which became Western literature. So how did these early interpreters of foreign ideas go about rendering Western verse into Japanese? Let us take the example of Ueda Bin's *Kaicho-on* ("The Sound of the Tide").

In the words of Ueda himself, "*In translating the beautiful style of western Transcendental verse, I mostly use a 7-5 metre but I have sometimes broken this mould in Symbolist works. I have purposefully done this so that the Japanese translation would suit the original graceful style*" [7]. Ueda goes on applauding the virtues of Symbolism in the preface to *Kaicho-on*, but as far as explaining what actual form his translations took, we only find the above short comment. In the same text, he also says that "*When one tries to convey the beauty of foreign poetry in his own language, he must respect the rich poetic tradition of his country but not to the sacrifice of the meaning and creative vitality of the original* ". On the other hand, he expresses the opinion that a literal translation is not necessarily a great one, and it is desirable to render the original content in terms which people will be familiar with. Ueda brilliantly demonstrated in his work how this can be done, but what exactly is the "7-5 metre" that he envisaged as "perfectly suited

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7 See the Introduction to *Kaicho-on* (1905) in "Ueda Bin Shu" (Meiji Bungaku Zenshu 31, Chikuma Shobou, 1966)

to the beauty of Transcendental poetry"?

The 7-5 syllable structure of *waka* is what we have known as *uta* for a very long time in Japan and, of course, it thrived in the context of a splendid aristocratic culture during its zenith. Thus, we have come to associate the repetition of a certain number of syllables (or morae) with poetic expression and while different patterns are certainly possible, the 7-5 or the 5-7 metre is the one most representative of Japanese verse. So this is not a structure of some sort of intrinsically transcendental or superior nature, but what makes it special is that it appears in the songs and ballads of Japanese narrative art as well as various other musical genres. The artistic forms this familiar pattern finds expression in are actually quite diverse, both in high art and in popular art, and perhaps it would not be an exaggeration to say that if one wants to have something instantly recognised as verse in Japan he would do well to follow the 7-5 style.

The success of *Kaicho-on* owes a lot to the choice of this particular metre. However, it was so received so well not because Ueda himself deliberately chose a 'prestigious' style but because this verse structure is the one most typical of Japanese *uta* and as such could reach and intrigue a very broad range of readers, regardless of whether we have a translation of Parisian melancholy, German Idealism or English Romanticism. The rendering of such works into a poetic pattern very familiar to Japanese people provided the initial impetus and genres like free verse and *shintaishi* (lit. "new verse") appeared later on. However, these subsequent developments meant that *uta* was transferred to the domain of written culture. In other words, *uta* has now become *shi*.

In contrast, Konstantin's "Longing for the South" is still *uta* to the people of Macedonia. They share the poet's love for his homeland, they understand his pain, they shed tears for his cruel fate and they appreciate his great lifework. Konstantin never explicitly tried to instigate nationalist sentiments or dreams of liberty among Macedonians but he spoke directly to their hearts. This is because he sang with their sounds and in their rhythm thus giving a voice to their suffering.

3. From tales to prose: Marko Tsepenkov

3.1. Perhaps it would be difficult to claim that Marko Tsepenkov has played the role of a *great individual* in the establishment of standard Macedonian. Before he went to Sofia and spent his last years there, he was a tailor in the town of Prilep in Central Macedonia. Tsepenkov started collecting and writing down folk tales, songs and riddles while he was working and continued to do so even when he became a master-tailor himself. He was in fact retelling rather than recording folklore and there is some dispute among contemporary folklorists about the extent to which his collection can be considered authentic. Here, I will put the focus on the prose style of Tsepenkov's tales, as they vastly outnumber anything else he wrote. Collecting folk stories was the great achievement of his life and the work that this self-educated tailor did with steadfast determination gave Macedonia its very first prose. I will try

to revisit his life and times focusing on the unique individual that Master Tsepenkov was.

Marko Tsepenkov was born in 1829 in Western Macedonia and grew up in Prilep. He wrote an autobiography[8] in his late sixties, from which we know a great deal about him. According to Tsepenkov himself, his father was a sort of healer endowed with various talents and "whatever you asked him, he had an answer, he was instantly able comprehend new things". He was loved and respected by the people, but because of his carelessness with money the family lived in poverty. So, in contrast to the Miladinovs, his children were not able to get a good education. Like other poor boys, Tsepenkov was apprenticed to a local craftsman but, from an early age, young Marko showed an interest in learning how to read and write and a thirst for knowledge.

In 1846, Marko spent a month or so in Struga with his father who had gone to look for work there. The parent sent his inquisitive son to study with a local teacher. One could only learn Greek in the towns of South-western Macedonia at the time and the boy was very eager to master the Greek alphabet:

" *I started to learn the alphabet and before long I knew the primer by heart (lit.* "*to sing the letters*"). *My father then told me to start reading the psalm-book. He said it was like a huge sea, all knowledge was in it and that was why I had to study it.*"

However, Marko soon realised that just learning the letters and how to write them meant very little in itself. He began to wonder how huge this sea of knowledge, bigger than the lake of Ohrid, actually was.

3.2. So here was our Marko, already a hard-working tailor and even more hungry for education. He would learn Greek with his customers (some of who turned out to be far from expert in it) and learn Turkish from his Turkish patrons, but a big turning-point in his life came in 1856 when he met Dimitar Miladinov, then a teacher in Prilep. Miladinov had heard of Tsepenkov's knowledgeable father and started to visit their house regularly[9]. One Sunday, he dropped by after church and sang them a song:

" *We waited and when he came we treated him to some rakija[10] and coffee. They started talking about this and that and then suddenly, Dimitar took a notebook out of his pocket and told my father: Listen, Kosta, I will sing you something that I wrote down from a man, this is*

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8 *Avtobiografija,* in *Marko K. Tsepenkov (in 10 volumes) 10*
9 Dimitar is said to have started gathering folk songs after he met Grigorovich, but there is no clear record of that. The greater part of the brothers' work on the Collection was done between 1854 and 1857 (Shapkarev 1983:59). According to Petar Dinekov, Konstantin had also started contributing to the collection at quite an early stage.
10 a local alcoholic beverage

how it goes ... (goes on to sing a little song)

My father told him, Why are you telling us all that? Give us something more serious. Even my Marko knows heaps of this children's stuff."

Kosta did not think much of the incident, but Marko remembered Dimitar's words and burned with desire to learn what business this great teacher had inquiring about children's songs. The youngster made his father ask Miladinov that very question the next time he came. Upon hearing it, Dimitar was visibly worried, looked around and carefully said:

You ask me why I collect these things, but please swear by the heaven and earth that you are not going to tell anyone, for you know those people - they will betray me to the Greeks. I am collecting songs and children's riddles and I must save money to publish them in print, so that they will remain and be sung in the future when all becomes Greek. Look at the Greek I have turned into.

Marko could not forget these words and his interest in songs, tales and proverbs grew still more. Perhaps Dimitar's confession was just the right compass he needed to cross the vast sea of knowledge. Or perhaps his boat was ready to sail and Miladinov's words only pushed it into the water. Dimitar was Marko's Grigorovich, so to speak.

Tsepenkov asked his father to tell him stories and tried to write them down. He wanted to absorb everything he heard and filled his pockets with notebooks. He tried to learn how to write Greek and Turkish, taught himself everything he could and even started playing the tamboura[11]. Marko worked during the day and wrote down folk tales at night. He often didn't even have enough time to eat or sleep properly; his voyage wasn't going to be a walk in the park and he knew it:

" I started writing down small tales and other things I heard from mom and dad, but I just could not arrange them very well. I couldn't write fast - it would take me a week to finish a tale. I made my father tell me stories in the evening or on holidays."

Tsepenkov was sure he couldn't write because he didn't know how to spell properly and didn't have any knowledge of "grammar". However, ignorance was not the problem - he was just facing the same problems that Dimitar Miladinov had faced before. Konstantin had found a way to express his feelings in verse, but perhaps even he would not have been able to write prose in anything but Greek.

Young Marko could not comprehend the source of his troubles yet. He blamed his poor father for not letting him finish his education, only to be reprimanded:*" Isn't all that studying*

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11 a local string instrument

enough already, what do you want to be? You should have learned a craft and try to get out of this wretched poverty." Marko wasn't convinced; his wealth were the wonderful stories that his parents told him. As long as they lived, he thought, this was to be his calling.

3.3. Today, Tsepenkov's collage of folklore is available to us in its entirety, thanks to the ten-volume collection published in 1972[12]. Various parts of his writings had been made public since 1891, but this edition finally showed us the actual enormous size of his work. Other than folk tales, Tsepenkov recorded songs, proverbs, professional jargon and argot; he described and drew illustrations of traditional tools and implements. According to Tome Sazdov, it took him no less than 42 years to produce this material[13], which all came from his own hand and without referring to any pre-existing sources. Marko the tailor is indisputably one of the most prolific collectors of folklore for his time.

During the process of compilation and editing, Tsepenkov's original transcribing system was modified according to modern orthographic norms and some inconsistencies were corrected, but in his writing we can still feel the authentic rhythm of the Prilep dialect, which is well-studied nowadays. Tsepenkov's autobiography does not tell us exactly how he eventually overcame the problem of writing down oral speech but we know that he admired and cherished the Miladinovs' collection of folk songs like a "a second bible" ("*kako vtoro vangjelie*")

Tsepenkov had a copy of the 1861 edition of the Collection, and it is thought that he obtained it through Kuzman Shapkarev, who was a pupil of Dimitar's and himself a well-known collector of folklore[14]. We can reasonably assume that from an early stage Tsepenkov constantly kept Miladinov's book at his side, was intimately familiar with it and modelled his own work after it. The dialect of Ohrid shares a number of characteristics with that of Prilep as well as the dialects of Western Macedonia in general, and this volume must have been very helpful to Tsepenkov's writing. As I mentioned above, we don't exactly know his specific reasoning in resolving each individual problem while trying to write down speech and it is a fact that devising a systematic method of transcription was not his strength, but I would sum up the characteristics of his style in the following four points:

1) The speech of the Prilep dialect is realistically and colourfully reflected in Tsepenkov's writing.
2) He more or less establishes a consistent writing style when transcribing speech and its live rhythm.
3) On the other hand, his style in explanatory passages lacks in logical connectedness and organization.

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12 *Marko K. Tsepenkov (in 10 volumes)*
13 Tome Sazdov, Marko Tsepenkov(1829-1920), in *Marko Tsepenkov (in 10 volumes) 1,* 1972, p.11
14 *Marko K. Tsepenkov (in 10 volumes)*, 10, in Comment 31, p.397

4) Therefore, Tsepenkov's narration is most effective and balanced in passages directly relating character speech.

First, let us consider the role of the Prilep dialect in Tsepenkov's writing. According to his autobiography, the first tales that he wrote down were told to him by his parents. But when that initial source was exhausted, he started collecting stories from his customers, sought out people from his town who knew something interesting or asked travellers to tell him tales. He became famous as a story-collector and some people would come to his shop and actually try to sell a tale or two. So we have stories coming from different regions of the country, which of course must have been originally told in various dialects and even foreign languages. However, everything that he heard, Tsepenkov wrote in his own Prilep dialect. Kiril Penushliski notes this fact by saying that "*he didn't devote his energy to preserving the original form of the tales, but rather to correctly relating their content* ".[15].

In effect, this means that Tsepenkov can also be viewed as a literary author. His Prilep dialect became something more than just a vehicle for recording speech. It also became a medium of self-expression and a tool of original creation. The existence of such a natural literary talent in Prilep who wrote in the local vernacular would no doubt later be a big influence on Blaze Koneski, who was born in the same region.

3.4. Next, let me try and reflect on the aspect of style in Tsepenkov's work. When we write nowadays, we try to adhere to grammatical norms but what we regard as grammar is often in fact nothing more than institutionalised style. A good example would be the distinction between the Japanese particles *wa* and *ga*. We know that we cannot account for the difference in their use only in grammatical terms. When we write, our choices are invariably constricted by unwritten rules instilled in us at school (and reinforced through writing school compositions and reading in general). These implicit norms constitute a unique culture within a language.

Tsepenkov could not draw on such a culture. All he had was a sharp ear, good aural memory, concentration and patience. Nowadays, we have access to folk tale narrations in their original form, through sound recordings for example. Narrators of more recent generations can certainly be very skilled but when we compare similar folklore motifs in theirs and Tsepenkov's stories, the uniqueness of the latter becomes apparent. Tsepenkov could not put sentences together according to any grammatical tradition, but he always tried to relate the essence of what he had heard and, through persistent examination and re-examination of his work, he was able to refine his storyteller's craft. He originally thought in terms of "*singing a proverb*" or "*singing the alphabet*", by which he meant the act of reciting, and even when he worked on his tales and proverbs, he no doubt spoke them aloud, i.e. "sang" them as he wrote.

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15 Kiril Penushliski, Kon narodnite prikazni na Marko K. Tsepenkov, in *Marko K. Tsepenkov (in 10 volumes)9*, 1972, p.251

This is clearly manifested in the speech of his characters, a good example of which would be the fable "The Wolf and the Donkey". In it, an old man is going to a faraway village to be the best man at a wedding. He loads many presents on his donkey and sets off, but falls down asleep on the way. The donkey leaves him behind and continues alone but meets a wolf. He uses his wit to avoid being eaten and tells the wolf, "Why on earth would you want to eat me? I have been looking for you for a long time, the villagers have sent me to invite you to be the best man at their wedding. See this bag in my packsaddle? There is wine, rakija and bread in it so that you don't go hungry. Hop on and let's hurry ahead, for the villagers are all waiting for you to honour them as best man":

A. *Kako be, volku, kje me jadish? Ja od koga te baram tebe, praten sum od selanite da te kanam za kodzjabashija. Gledash oti imam torba obesena, na samarov. Vo torbata karta vino, pagur rakija i edna pogacha. Da ne si gladen guku kachi se na samarov da odime pobrgu oti so golema chest te chekat selanite za kodzjabashija.*[16]

B. *—Bre aman, kumche volche — mu odgoori magareto — kako kje me jadish koga te baram posakum jas tebe, ja kachi mi se gore na samar da izvadish od torbata belata topla pogacha i kartana co rojnoto vino; poveli, zemi pogachata izej si ja i ispi ja kartata so rojnoto vino i kachi mi se na samarcheto moe, da poveli mi doma kaj stopana mi za da bidish nunko, da venchaash zet so nevesta. Ov, ov, kumche volche, shto k'smet sum imal jas, shto te najdov brgo, brgo, oti trebashe da prevrtam site planinje i ridoi za da te najdam, chunki taka mi naracha stopan mi, ili da te najdam, ili nazad da ne se vratam bez tebe, chunki stopan mi moj et kodzjabashija, taka seto selo go slusha...*[17]

Version A. was narrated by Projka Momiroska, born in Prilep in 1908; it was recorded in 1970[18]. Tsepenkov's version B. is longer and vividly describes how the donkey wheedles the wolf into coming along by trying its best to explain how lucky it is to have finally found him as he and no other would be the perfect best man. Fed, satisfied and drunk, the wolf lets the donkey carry him to the village where he is naturally given a 'warm welcome' by the villagers. Tsepenkov must have written this very expressive and eloquent passage while actually reciting the donkey's words (and perhaps with a naughty chuckle on his face).

3.5. Japanese people faced a similar lack of writing tradition during the Meiji period when the need for the so-called *Genbun Itchi* (unification of the written and spoken forms of the language) became apparent. Let us remind ourselves here once again of Futabatei Shimei's

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16 *Makedonski narodni prikazni za zivotni* (prikazna 29), Institut za folklor – Skopje, 1869
17 *Volkot i magareto*, *Marko K. Tsepenkov (in 10 volumes)* 2 (prikazna 15)
18 In Momiroska's version the wolf is actually invited to be mayor of the village.

famous words:*" About the Genbun Itchi ... I have to confess that I first started writing in this way because I was no good at writing sentences."* [19]

Advised by Tsubouchi Shoyo to learn from the Rakugo of Encho, Futabatei, still not sure of himself, tried writing a piece in a more contemporary style. Shoyo is said to have encouraged him by saying, *"That's the way to go, don't stop in the middle of the road!"*. The initially hesitant Futabatei wrote in the following 1886 the first part of his famous *Ukigumo*, ("Floating Clouds") which ushered in the age of *Genbun Itchi* literature.

The problem faced by Meiji authors who wanted to write in a style closer to the spoken language was what to do with the copula at the end of sentences - should they use the neutral *dearu* or the polite *desu*. This problem was partly caused by the state of diglossia in Japan where official and third person accounts were written in Chinese or something resembling it, while private and everyday writing as well as first person texts used a form of Japanese which was based on the language spoken prior to the 10th century AD (the so-called *Yamato Kotoba*). There were, and still are, many Japanese novels written in the first person, but the style of the text depends on the choice of the author. Yamada Bimyo advocated the ornate *desu/masu* style (much has been said about its softness and tenderness), but his choice was undoubtedly influenced by his inability to break away from the *Yamato Kotoba* tradition. Futabatei emulated the oral art of Encho with its highly expressive powers of portrayal and observation; he put the wonderful tempo and energy of his native Edo dialect to good use in his *dearu* style which set the beginning of a new era in Japanese literature.

Ukigumo shows Futabatei's dissatisfaction with and desire to break away from the style of novels like Shoyo's *Tosei Shosei Katagi* ("Portraits of Contemporary Students"), which were still grounded in the tradition of popular Edo fiction. Futabatei's later works tended to be written in a less colloquial manner, but *Ukigumo* nevertheless started a new literary epoch with the speech of its characters sounding realistic and contemporary and descriptive passages rich with objective observation. It has to be said that there is certainly a lack of balance between these two elements in Futabatei's novels, but at the same time it is this disequilibrium that reveals to us the pain and strong spirit of the author. The colloquial sound of his texts which had no clear model or tradition to follow and his struggle to establish a new style made Futabatei's situation very similar to Tsepenkov's. The difference is, though, that in Japan the struggle to establish a new kind of literary language which later sublimated in the work of Natsume Soseki and greatly affected the style of subsequent authors still remained confined just to the world of literature. For Japanese people, language is not something individuals have fought for; it is simply an anonymous entity whose rules they must abide by.

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19 See Yo-ga Genbun-icchi-no Yurai (1906) in *"Futabatei Shimei Zenshu"* 4, (Chikuma Shobou, 1985)

The literary fates of Miladinov and Tsepenkov were very different. The former was remembered by the people as a martyr; the name of the latter was for a long time forgotten in Macedonia, his work having been published in Bulgaria first.

Tsepenkov yearned to have the fruit of years of painstaking labour published and thus to give his country a work of proportions and importance comparable to that of the Miladinovs. However, he did not find a way of doing that at home, and, having heard that recordings of folklore would be better appreciated in Bulgaria, Tsepenkov left his shop to his son and went to Sofia in 1888. There, his lifework was acknowledged by the folklorist Ivan Shishmanov and part of it was included in the 1889 state-funded publication "Collection of Oral Folklore and Customs". Our poor tailor was finally noticed by the scholars and he knew this was the reward for his long and faithful journey. The years of hard work had left him blind in one eye but he lived to be ninety-one, dying three decades later in 1920.

At an advanced age and far from home, Tsepenkov wrote his autobiography, which I have already referred to above. Just like Konstantin Miladinov who used his extensive knowledge of folk songs to express in verse his most intimate feelings not long before the end of his days on earth, Tsepenkov exercised his painstakingly acquired tale-weaving craft one last time to write, in his unique style[20], a truly original story - the story of a long and remarkable life.

4. Conclusion: the passage to Blazhe Koneski

In this article, I have looked at two key figures in the history of Macedonian from the point of view of their unique individualities and the relationship they had with their vernacular. The poetry of Konstantin Miladinov and the prose of Marko Tsepenkov played a most important role in the establishment of a local literature. Of course, there are other authors who have to be credited as proponents and defenders of Macedonian as an independent language, but my main concerns here are literary and linguistic.

I will conclude with a few remarks on another outstanding individual in the recent history of this language. The numerous streams drifting towards independent Macedonian were united in one big and rapid current by the person of Blaze Koneski. A lot can be said about his many contributions, but in every aspect of his work he took the achievements of the past, built on them and invariably excelled. The role he played is bigger than just shaping the history of a language; he also helped define a whole nation.

Koneski is a contemporary of ours who was born about a century after the time of

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20 Blazhe Koneski has this to say about Tsepenkov's style: "*Tsepenkov remains in the framework of the folk tale, he does the best he possibly can here, but he enriches the inner texture of the story in a number of ways that bring it closer to the prose of today. We cannot say that this is a consequence of any conscious understanding of how to develop new storytelling techniques. It is better to think of his approach as a spontaneous inclination to vividly relate the content of the tale ...*" (Koneski 1954, in *Izbrani dela vo sedum knigi 4*, 1981, p.81)

Miladinov and Tsepenkov and died in 1993. Many accounts as well as his own writing inform us of his life, but there are still many unknowns about how he came to be an integral part of the movement working towards the establishment of "Modern Literary Macedonian"; nor can we be sure about what drove Koneski as a young man to follow the path that later made him one of the national leaders of Macedonia. His death has all but turned him into a national icon and this has somewhat obscured the real man behind it.

We have seen how individuals have played important roles in the story of language creation by inspiring the people and reaching new literary heights. On the other hand, language reform in Japan has proceeded under the aegis and strict guidance of the state. Expressions of individual creativity, views and discernment have either remained largely anonymous in this process or, as the work of writers like Futabatei and Soseki exemplifies, taken on a very influential but isolated form. That is why the forces pushing towards standardisation and literary reform in Japan, which have exerted a strong influence on dialects like those of Okinawa, can largely be explained in the context of the Meiji government's policy to increase the nation's wealth and military power. This is not to say that individuality has not played any part in this process whatsoever, but in the end, all responsibility for language reform has been with the state and not within the individual.

The symbolic role of the individual in laying the foundations of literature is especially important in the case of smaller countries which have not been lucky enough to have an independent and stable history. The extraordinary lives of outstanding personalities, their painstaking search for a new literary style and the popular sympathy with their joys and sorrows are all factors that played an extremely big part in shaping the identity of Slavic languages in the Balkans. At the same time however, extraordinary individuals could be the ones held responsible if adverse social changes were to occur, which might be seen to be the case with Josip Broz Tito.

It is definitely a little too early to know exactly how Koneski will go down in history, but it is certain that his life's story will be impossible to tell outside the context of the peculiar political entity called Yugoslavia. It shall be interesting to see in what light Macedonia, now a completely independent nation, will eventually come to view the role of this unique individual.

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