SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMMENTARY

CHAPTER 21

168 Introduction

The preceding chapters have presented a description of BCS; this complex in turn may be defined as the common core underlying Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. These chapters have also identified the major grammatical points on which the three separate systems diverge. No consistent attempt has been made to account for vocabulary differences, although individual examples have been supplied with notations identifying any variant forms which are generally viewed as characteristic of only one or two of the three systems. The examples themselves, however, were chosen solely to illustrate general grammatical points; the extent to which they happened to contain variational elements is purely random.

Taken as a whole, the description contained in these chapters demonstrates without a doubt that the core of BCS functions as a single linguistic system, just as the numerous references to Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian within these chapters have demonstrated that each of these individual systems has its own noteworthy identifying characteristics. The question of whether what has been described herein is one language or more than one has occasioned a great deal of discussion among professionals and laymen alike. The answer, of course, is that both statements are true: the language is simultaneously one and more than one. Everyone admits that Serbs, Croats, Bosnians (both Muslims and Christians), and Montenegrins can understand each other without difficulty, and that the reason they can do so is because the languages they speak share the same grammar, and because the vast majority of vocabulary items are the same. That grammar, together with its common core of vocabulary items, constitutes the single language here called BCS.

At the same time, it is now a fact that this grammar is a property shared among more than one language. As of this writing (late 2005), three languages – Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian – have been officially recognized. Should Montenegro become an independent state, a fourth is very likely to be recognized. Although each of these languages serves more of a symbolic function than a communicative one (since "BCS" is what all their speakers use to communicate with each other), the traits which separate Croatian and Serbian from one another are quite real and clearly identifiable; and whereas those which separate Bosnian from either Serbian or Croatian are both less in number and less striking in content, they are also clearly identifiable. Whether or not Montenegrin should be separated from Serbian linguistically is unclear; what is clear is that there are a number of differences which carry strong symbolic meaning for Montenegrins (for more discussion, see [**189a**]).

Most of the differences between Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian have been mentioned in the preceding chapters, as facts of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary or usage. The remaining chapters shift the focus to the social, cultural, political and historical context within which these differences function. The intent of these chapters is to provide the background which allows one to see beyond the seeming paradox of a language which is simultaneously one and more than one.

The second half of the term *sociolinguistic* reminds one that the topic continues to be language. The first half, however, refers to the fact that language is now being viewed not so much as a communicative tool but rather as a symbolic system, the force of whose symbols are comprehensible only when seen in the context of a highly complex social situation. This social situation, in turn, is the result of historical processes in which the issues of language, politics and ethnic identity have been intricately intertwined for the entire modern era.

This section of the book – the sociolinguistic commentary – begins with a brief outline of the history of writing systems in the BCS lands and a summary of the major events connected with language standardization of the common language. It then surveys the major parameters of variation over the geographical area covered by BCS, and discusses the role of these differences in distinguishing the several separate linguistic standards. Following this, issues of language and identity are treated in three separate chapters, one each devoted to Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian (plus Montenegrin). The concluding chapter revisits the issue of the relationship between Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian on the one hand, and BCS on the other.

169 Writing systems

The two major writing systems of BCS are the alphabets called *Cyrillic* and *Latin* (review [**1**]). Each has strong religious associations for most BCS speakers: the Cyrillic alphabet with the Eastern Orthodox religion (to which Serbs and Montenegrins adhere), and the Latin alphabet with the Roman Catholic religion (to which Croats adhere). Yet neither was the original Slavic alphabet. That alphabet, called *Glagolitic*, is not in active use any more, but its place in the history of Slavic letters is known to all educated Slavs. Indeed, Slavs from the Balkans feel particular pride in the events which underlay the beginnings of Slavic literacy.

169a. The Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabets

The story begins in the middle of the 9th century, with the desire of the Moravian prince Rastislav that his subjects be converted to Christianity not in Latin but in their own language. Accordingly, Rastislav requested the Byzantine emperor, Michael III, to send him liturgical books written in Slavic and missionaries who could give religious instruction in Slavic. Michael commissioned the brothers Constantine and Methodius to undertake this task. They were chosen not just because of their experience as missionaries but also because they were natives of the city of Solun (modern Thessaloniki, today the second largest city of Greece). This fact was relevant because, as the emperor pointed out in a much-quoted passage, everyone knew that all inhabitants of Solun were speakers of Slavic. The brothers set to the task of devising an alphabet and translating the liturgy into Slavic. The letters they created consisted of various ingenious combinations of circles, triangles and crosses, all important Christian symbols; and the alphabet comprising these letters was what became known as *Glagolitic* (the name is taken from the old Slavic verb meaning *speak*). Together with their disciples, the brothers traveled to Moravia in 862-863.

Their mission there was successful, though not without difficulty. In 869, the brothers were required to travel to Rome to defend the then-heretical idea that the Gospel should be written in any other language than Latin, Greek or Aramaic. Only Methodius returned: Constantine died in Rome, having taken monastic orders and the name Cyril on his deathbed. Methodius continued the work, but eventually he and his disciples came to be so persecuted that they had to flee for home. Methodius died on the way in 885 (in Pannonia, now modern Hungary), and only seven of the original disciples made it back home to the Balkans. Some remained in the western South Slavic regions, teaching the new alphabet to Slavic churchmen there, especially along the Dalmatian coast. Others returned to the core Byzantine lands, and settled at the court of the Bulgarian king Boris who welcomed them warmly, since he was intent on converting his own people to Christianity and had need both of books in Slavic and teachers to instruct his scribes. At this point, Bulgaria had been a functioning state for some two hundred years already. The spoken lan-

guage was Slavic, but the language of writing was Greek, and Boris's scribes chose not to learn the new and very exotic Glagolitic alphabet. Instead, they adapted their own Greek letters to the Slavic sounds, and the alphabet derived in this manner was given the name *Cyrillic* – in honor of Constantine-Cyril, the founder of Slavic letters.

As the Balkan Slavs gradually embraced Christianity, they also gained the ability to write in their own language. Both the Glagolitic and the Cyrillic alphabets (called in BCS **glagoljica** and **ćirilica**) spread throughout the Balkans along with books and the missionaries who spread Christianity. The establishment of the Serbian Orthodox church in the early 13th century was an important milestone in Serbian history, and the Cyrillic alphabet has been associated indelibly with the Serbian Orthodox church from that time onward. Indeed, the clearly marked connection of the alphabet to the Serbian church and to its medieval roots has always provided a strong conservative bulwark within Serbian letters. The 19th century drive to modernize the alphabet in Serbia faced extremely strong opposition from the conservative clergy (for more discussion, see [**170a**, **185**]). There are some today, in fact, who feel that Serbian Cyrillic should undo some of the modernization and resume a more archaic form (for more discussion, see [**187a**]). The "canonical" form of pre-modern Cyrillic, therefore, was that used by the medieval Serbian men of letters. Further to the west, Christians in Bosnia also wrote in Cyrillic. These letters, based roughly on cursive Cyrillic, developed such a different form that the resulting alphabet came to be known by the regionally-based term **bosančica**, despite the fact that it was still a recognizably Cyrillic writing system. Muslim Slavs in pre-modern Bosnia gradually developed a version of the Arabic script in which to write their native Slavic, and this alphabet was called **arebica**. Others in Bosnia wrote in various forms of the Roman alphabet, all called **latinica**.

169b. The Latin alphabet

Although Croatian today is written exclusively in the Latin alphabet, the Croats have a very multi-graphic history. Some inland Croats wrote in the Cyrillic called **bosančica**, and many on the coast wrote in Glagolitic. Indeed, Croatian Glagolitic was sufficiently widespread to have developed two regional styles, one with rounder letters and one with more angular letters. The former is called **obla glagoljica**, and the latter is called **uglasta** (or **uglata**) **glagoljica**. Glagolitic took on great symbolic importance in pre-modern Croatia: those who wrote in this script could assert an identity which was separate both from Orthodoxy (symbolized by the Cyrillic script) and from a slavish dependence on Roman Catholicism (symbolized by the Latin script). In certain remote parts of Croatia, Glagolitic was in use up to the early 20th century, and the letters are being revived today as part of various national symbols. However, the Latin alphabet gained predominance early, and it is now the single script not only of Croats but also of all non-Orthodox South Slavs. Orthodox Slavs use it freely as well alongside Cyrillic, as it is obviously advantageous to also be able to use an alphabet in which one can communicate more easily with Europe and the West.

In pre-modern times, those who used the Latin alphabet frequently wrote (or at least knew) other languages as well. Depending on the area and the time in history, these other languages were Latin, Italian, German, and Hungarian. The spelling conventions used to write Slavic sounds were adopted from these different languages; those living further south usually used Italian spelling rules and those living further north usually used Hungarian spelling rules. One of the goals of the pan-South Slavic language reform movement of the 19th century, the *Illyrian movement* (for definition and discussion, see [**170b**]), was to standardize the spelling. Some of the letters chosen were taken from Czech, with its superscript diacritical marks (such as **č**, **ž**, **š** and the like); others were the personal creation of the movement's leader, Ljudevit Gaj. In honor of this historical figure, and in the desire for heightened cultural autonomy, some Croats today have begun calling their alphabet **gajica** instead of the more traditional term **latinica**.

170 Language standardization

The two language reform movements which led to what has become modern BCS can both be dated roughly to the second quarter of the 19th century. In modern commentaries, one most often sees them referred to by the adjectives *Vukovian* and *Illyrian*. The first of these terms refers to the indefatigable folklorist, language reformer and lexicographer Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787-1864), while the second of them refers to the Illyrian cultural (and eventually political) reform movement centered in Zagreb, whose acknowledged leader was Ljudevit Gaj (1808-1872). Both of these movements wished to create a "language of the people", a language that would not only unify a broad swath of South Slavs, but would also underscore the idea of independence – political independence from the Ottoman Turks in the case of the Serbs and cultural independence within the Habsburg Empire in the case of the Illyrians. Although the Vukovian movement was the cornerstone of all language standardization work after 1859, the heritage of the Illyrian movement remained important, especially among Croats (for more discussion, see [**179**]).

170a. Vuk Karadžić and language reform

Vuk, who has become such a legendary figure in the South Slavic lands that he is referred to by his first name only, was the seventh son of a poor but proud family who were fully conscious of their roots in the eastern Herzegovinian lands. Because he was lame (and therefore unfit for more manly occupations), his father sent him to a monastery to learn to read and write. Using these skills, he eventually became scribe to Karageorge, the leader of the (briefly) successful Serbian uprising of 1804 -1806. When this rebellion was crushed by the Ottomans in 1813, Vuk fled along with others to Austria, and settled in Vienna. There he submitted for publication a manuscript containing South Slavic folk songs along with a brief discussion of the language in which these songs were sung. Because the book's topic accorded so well with current Romantic interests in folk poetry and in the promotion of popular (that is, spoken) languages as written standards, it sparked the interest of the Slovene Jernej Kopitar, who headed the Austrian bureau charged with approving all publications in Slavic. Together with his influential friends Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, Kopitar secured enough backing for Vuk to begin to work full time on the two projects which modern scholars would call folklore collection and language reform.

Vuk dedicated his entire life to the cause of a people's Serbian language (which for him was identical with Serbian folk literature), as well as to the cause of Serbian independence. His maxim, adopted from the German Johann Christoph Adelung, was *Write as you speak* (**Piši kao što govoriš**). Although now this phrase is taken to refer to what some call the "phonological" spelling of BCS (review [**167j**]), in Vuk's days it had much broader resonance. Because the Serbian written language of the early 19th century contained so many high-style words connected with the Orthodox church, including a large number from the Russian church language, it was inaccessible to all but the most elite strata of the population. In addition, there was no normative standard for the written language; rather, every author wrote in his own highly creative manner. Vuk's proposal was to abandon this written language entirely and to create a new one, based on the language of folk poetry (and especially the famous epic songs of the heroic past). Furthermore, he proposed that the new written language take as its standard the speech of a particular area. This was to be the ijekavian East Herzegovinian speech of the region whence he himself originated, an area which was known to be a stronghold of traditional epic singing.

Vuk was extremely strict in his principles: he would not admit into the dictionary or the grammar of this new language any word or grammatical form that did not exist naturally in this East Herzegovinian speech. In terms of spelling, Vuk promoted the simplified system which, although it has since become indelibly associated with his name, was in fact developed by the cleric Sava Mrkalj (1783-1833). The principle underlying this system was *one sound – one letter*, which meant both that every sound should be represented by only one letter, and that each distinctive sound of the spoken language should have a letter corresponding to it alone. Both spelling and

vocabulary were issues on which Vuk faced considerable opposition from the higher echelons of the Serbian clergy. The proposed spelling reforms were particularly disagreeable to these conservative churchmen, who saw the very form of the alphabet then in use as a concrete bond with their medieval past. They could see no reason to abandon nearly fifteen of these alphabet letters (despite the fact that many of them referred to sounds indistinguishable from one another in speech) or to introduce five new ones (despite the fact that these new letters did a much better job of representing these five sounds than any of the older ones). Indeed, the fact that one of these new letters was an import from the distrusted and feared Roman Catholic alphabet – the letter **j** – caused many to brand Vuk as a traitor and a presumed Habsburg spy.

When it came to grammar and vocabulary, the clergy could not take seriously Vuk's insistence on the spoken East Herzegovinian dialect as a basis for the new language. Viewed from the clergy's base of operations in southern Hungary (now the area around modern Novi Sad), this dialect was almost a foreign tongue. To the clergy, the language of these songs (and the songs themselves) sounded backwards and simple. But Vuk never wavered in his conviction that the language of these epic songs was the natural and appropriate language for the Serbs. His travels throughout the land, especially to Montenegro and the Dalmatian coastal city of Dubrovnik, assured him that the ijekavian speech of his ancestors was spoken over a very broad area, and that it was consequently worthy of becoming the official standardized speech of the Serbian people who were then slowly consolidating their independence from Ottoman Turkish rule. Vuk's struggle was long: his first linguistic publication was in 1814, and the Serbian government did not fully accept his language reforms until 1868, four years after his death. Today, Vuk's language is the basis of modern BCS.

170b. The Illyrian movement and language reform

In contrast to Vuk, who was a single, highly focused activist, the Illyrian movement was the work of a collective of cultural reformers. Their goal was to promote South Slavic – rather than Latin, Hungarian, Italian or German – as the language of cultural expression. Although the movement was based in Zagreb, and has subsequently been identified with Croatian linguistic schools, the ultimate Illyrian goal was the union of all South Slavs. This was to be accomplished by the promotion of the common Illyrian language. There were several reasons for choosing the name *Illyrian*. First, it was assumed that the ancient Illyrians were among the original inhabitants of the Balkan peninsula; and second, it was believed at that time that the Croats were direct descendants of the Illyrians. In addition, the term had a long history of describing South Slavic Christians (it was used mostly by Catholics but also by some Orthodox clergy). Third, it had been the official name of a province of the Roman Empire; and finally, it had been the name chosen by Napoleon for his own short-lived Balkan coastal province, just three decades past. Therefore, the Illyrian activists argued, it was an appropriate name for the language of a united South Slavic people. Although the members of the Illyrian movement were obviously Romantic idealists, they were realistic enough to see that there could be no one form of Illyrian that would correspond to the speech of all South Slavs. Rather, they saw Illyrian as a written language that would unite the South Slavs: each would continue to speak in his own manner, but all would write the same way.

The Illyrian slogan was *Write for the eye and not for the ear* (**Piši za oko, a ne za uho**). One of their most noteworthy proposals, in fact, was to spell the old Slavic sound *jat'* using a single letter. This letter, called the "horned e" [**ě**], was – like many other letters in their proposed spelling system – taken from Czech spelling (indeed, today it is the letter used by specialists to refer to the ancient letter and its sound). Had this principle been adopted, the present "ekavian – ijekavian – ikavian" differences would remain at the spoken level only, and all would write the same (with the result being similar to the British and American pronunciations, respectively, of words like *tomato* and *rather*). Additionally, the Illyrians proposed that the spelling and the grammar should be such as to allow one to recover the history of the language. Their goal was not so much to retain older forms for the sake of tradition (as was that of the Serbian clergy who op-

posed Vuk); rather, it was to create a language that would recapitulate in its forms the different stages of its evolution. Both movements were quintessentially Romantic: Vuk's in its radical devotion to the "language of the people", and the Illyrians in their adherence to a model which was not only based on the language of the people but also made reference to evolutionary principles.

The Illyrians were additionally faced with the dilemma of an extremely non-unified speech area. Whereas Serbia is relatively monolithic linguistically, the area of Croatia encompasses three very distinct dialects – čakavian, kajkavian, and štokavian (for definition and brief descriptions, see [**171a**] and Map 2) – each much more different from the other than today's standard Serbian is from today's standard Croatian. To attain the practical goal of South Slavic unification, therefore, the Illyrians realized they must not only choose just one of these dialects as their base, but must furthermore choose the one that had the most similarity to the language found throughout Serbia. They chose the štokavian dialect, largely for geographical reasons. Although the revolutions of 1848 spelled the end of the Illyrian movement as an organization devoted to Slavic cultural (and political) autonomy, the fruits of language reform were lasting. In 1850, Croat representatives met with Vuk in Vienna, and concluded an agreement whereby Serbian and Croatian were viewed as one language with the same grammar but written in two alphabets.

170c. Vienna and beyond

It was easy for the signers of the Vienna agreement to agree that the joint language should be ijekavian only: this was not only Vuk's native Herzegovinian speech but was also the native speech of Montenegro, western Bosnia and southern Croatia (see [**171c**] and Map 4). It was considerably more difficult to reach agreements on individual points of grammar and spelling, due to the fact that the Illyrian principles of reproducing history through grammar and "writing for the eye and not the ear" both clashed with Vuk's overriding precept expressed in the maxim "write as you speak". Although Vuk's system won out and was codified into practice, the several schools of Croatian linguists have continued to support Illyrian principles to one extent or another.

Vuk was accompanied in Vienna by his assistant Đuro Daničić (1825-1882). On the conclusion of the Vienna agreement, Daničić relocated to Zagreb, where he spent the remainder of his life in work on codifying the language. The principles were stated by Vuk (and have been associated since then with his name), but their actual implementation was worked out by Daničić. He was assisted in this effort by a group of Croatian scholars who became known unofficially as the Croatian Vukovians (**hrvatski vukovci**). In 1861, the Cyrillic alphabet was introduced in the schools (alongside the Latin alphabet); and in 1866 the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts (**Jugoslavenska akademija nauka i umjetnosti**, or JAZU) was established, thanks to the work of the highly influential (and independently wealthy) Catholic Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815-1905). The following year, Pero Budmani published the first grammar to use the name Serbo-Croatian in its title (*Grammatica della lingua serbo-croata*; Vienna, 1867). The Vukovian-based effort of language standardization lasted the remainder of the century, and culminated in the 1899 publication of Tomo Maretić's ***Gramatika i stilistika hrvatskoga ili srpskoga književnog jezika*** (*Grammar and Stylistics of the Croatian or Serbian Literary Language*).

Throughout this period, Croatia was still part of Austro-Hungary. The Serbs, however, had achieved not only a fully independent state, but also a flourishing national culture based in Belgrade and Novi Sad. Despite the Vienna agreement (and the assiduous work of the Croatian Vukovians in establishing ijekavian in Croatia), the Serbs had by this time switched to ekavian, which was the native speech of their two cultural capitals as well as of the great majority of the Serbian population (see [**171c**] and Map 3). The degree of their attachment to ekavian, in fact, can be deduced from the content of a proposal made in 1913 by the influential Serbian literary critic Jovan Skerlić. In the interests of Serb – Croat unity, he suggested that the Serbs would give up the Cyrillic script and write in Latin only, if the Croats in turn would adopt Serbian vocabulary and ekavian pronunciation (Skerlić died in 1914, and the idea did not survive long after that).

The first Yugoslav state, formed in the collapse of the empires after 1918, bore the name *Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*. According to the official ideology, which was that the three peoples were eventually to become fused into one, the official language was named **srpsko-hrvatsko-slovenački** (*Serbo-Croato-Slovene*). It soon became clear to everyone that Slovene was a completely different language, and the third component of the name was quietly dropped. Although the language shared by the Serbs and Croats was still considered to be a single language, it remained without an officially accepted name. A variety of names were used, depending on one's point of view and one's location. The most common option was to use some sort of combination of the two names: one example is the phrase **hrvatski ili srpski** (*Croatian or Serbian*). But because the interwar Yugoslav state was clearly centered around Serbia, the language of administration (and of much of the culture) continued to be based upon Serbian.

170d. Novi Sad and beyond

Although the signatories of the 1850 Vienna agreement concluded that Serbs and Croats spoke one language with one grammar written in two different alphabets, they did not specify a name for this one language. This lacuna was filled in Titoist Yugoslavia. According to the Novi Sad agreement of 1954, the language was again seen as one language with one grammar written in two different alphabets. Now, however, it also had two official names and two official pronunciations. The two alphabets were Cyrillic and Latin, of course; the two names were the mirror-image terms **srpskohrvatski** (*Serbo-Croatian*) and **hrvatskosrpski** (*Croato-Serbian*). Although in its narrow sense the label *pronunciation* referred only to ekavian and ijekavian, it was generally assumed to cover other differences as well. That is, even in the days of greatest presumed unity, everyone accepted the existence of a set of binary differences.

Indeed, the label **varijanta** "variant" was accepted as a technical linguistic term in the 1960s; henceforth one spoke not of two pronunciations but rather of the **istočna varijanta** (*eastern variant*) and the **zapadna varijanta** (*western variant)* of the language. The eastern variant – henceforth (E) – was based on the educated speech of Belgrade, and the western variant – henceforth (W) – was based on the educated speech of Zagreb. In unofficial usage, however, many continued to use the terms **srpski** (*Serbian)* and **hrvatski** (*Croatian)*, respectively, especially in casual situations. The most obvious differences between the two variants were the use of the Latin alphabet (W) vs. the Cyrillic alphabet (E), and ijekavian pronunciation / spelling (W) vs. ekavian pronunciation / spelling (E). There were a few other noticeable differences, such as the tendency to use the single-word infinitive (W) vs. a phrase composed of **da** + present (E). But most of the differences were in vocabulary. Despite the fact that the vast majority of words continued to be the same in both variants, there were a number of words which were marked as belonging to one variant or the other. Most of these were words which had long been accepted as characteristic of Croatian on the one hand vs. Serbian on the other (for more discussion of "east / west" differences, see [**172**]).

A major intent of the Novi Sad agreement had been to find a balance acceptable to both Serbs and Croats. In this it was ultimately unsuccessful. Croat dissatisfaction with the agreement, which first surfaced in the early 1960s, culminated in 1967 in the proclamation of a separate Croatian language within Croatia and the resulting "Croatian Spring" movement (for more discussion, see [**182a**]). The movement itself was put down by the Titoist government in 1971, but by then the point had been clearly made that the binary conception of eastern vs. western variants was not a satisfactory (or sufficient) description of the language situation. Consistent with growing trends towards decentralization within Yugoslavia, a new constitution was promulgated in 1974. A striking feature of this constitution was that no official languages were named. Rather, each of the constituent republics was allowed to determine which "standard linguistic expression" it would use as its official administrative language. This amounted to a tacit admission that there were not two but four regional idioms of the language, corresponding to the cultural centers of the

four republican capitals where Serbo-Croatian (or Croato-Serbian) was spoken – Belgrade (Serbia), Zagreb (Croatia), Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Titograd (now Podgorica, Montenegro). The distinction between Belgrade and Zagreb (and between east and west) continued to be the major axis of differentiation. Now, however, what used to be the "eastern variant" was called simply Serbo-Croatian, while what used to be the "western variant" was called Croatian (the official full form of the name was "the Croatian literary language, the standard form of the popular [i.e. people's, or folk] language of the Croats and Serbs in Croatia, which is called Croatian or Serbian"). Montenegro chose the ijekavian variant of Serbo-Croatian as its official administrative language, while Bosnia-Herzegovina named the single language "Croato-Serbian / Serbo-Croatian", in the ijekavian pronunciation, and also mentioned the "Bosno-Herzegovinian standard linguistic expression" (**bosanskohercegovački standarnojezički izraz**).

Prior to this point, no one had paid particular attention to the characteristic speech of Bosnia-Herzegovina: everyone thought of it simply as a speech style combining traits of east and west. The pronunciation was consistently ijekavian, but the vocabulary was something of a melting pot. Often both members of an "east/west" pair were used, more or less as synonyms. Sometimes (particularly if the difference was one of spelling) only one of the two was used, and in this case it was usually the eastern or Serbian member of the pair. In addition, Bosnians used a number of their own characteristic words which were derived from Turkish, although this usually occurred more frequently in colloquial, specifically Bosnian contexts, and less in the formal written language (for more discussion, see [**176a**]). In fact, the commonality of east and west represented by the Novi Sad agreement suited Bosnians well, for it allowed them to straddle the Serb/Croat divide without having to align themselves with one side or the other; at the same time it allowed them to maintain the communicative code which had served them for centuries – a fluid mix of Serbian and Croatian features together with a characteristic Bosnian overlay – without needing to put a name to it. Now, however, the growing decentralization of the 1970s forced them to recognize more explicitly the multivalent nature of Bosnian speech. By using both the terms Serbo-Croatian and Croato-Serbian to name their officially accepted administrative language, they recognized the existence within Bosnia-Herzegovina of what used to be called the eastern and western variants; and by giving a semi-official name to the mix which had gone unnamed since the late 19th century, they laid the groundwork for an eventual Bosnian language, should it come to a split between Serbian and Croatian.