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PROVERBIAL EVIDENTIALITY:
ON THE GNOMIC USES OF THE CATEGORY OF STATUS IN
LANGUAGES OF THE BALKANS AND THE CAUCASUS
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0. INTRODUCTION

In the considerable literature on evidentiality that has grown up in the past thirty years or so (Nichols and Chafe 1986 and Guentchéva 1996 represent two of the more important collections of detailed empirical studies from a broad spectrum of languages and typologies), the data are generally drawn from a wide variety of spoken and written sources, but without any particular attention to genre. It is my intention in this article to examine how verbal categories that grammatically encode the speaker's subjective evaluation of commitment to the truth of the statement interact with a genre that by its very nature is intended to convey objective, universal truths, i.e. the proverb. I shall take as the languages of my investigation a selection of those spoken in a geographic continuum stretching from the east coast of the southern Adriatic across the Balkan peninsula and Anatolia to the Caucasus mountains, viz. Albanian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Georgian, and Lak.¹ Each of these languages has grammatical categories encoded in the verb expressing the speaker's subjective evaluation of the truth value of the narrated event, but the precise meaning and position of the categories within each of these languages' respective systems differs significantly. I shall begin with a brief discussion of my approach to the grammatical category in general and its realization in the languages under consideration in particular. I shall then define the concept of *proverb* as used in this article, followed by a language by language consideration of the

¹ In the examples, the following abbreviations will be used: Alb. = Albanian, Blg. = Bulgarian, Geo. = Georgian, Mac. = Macedonian, Trk. = Turkish.

interaction of the relevant grammatical categories with the gnomic context. The conclusion will argue that such an examination illustrates important differences in the position of status within each language's respective system for both synchronic and diachronic reasons.

1. STATUS AND EVIDENTIALITY

As I have argued elsewhere (e.g., Friedman 1979, 1986, 1988), the choice of verb forms commonly labeled *evidential* in much of the recent literature is based not on evidence but on the speaker's attitude toward the narrated event (see also Jacobsen 1986). I thus accept Aronson's (1977, 1991) reformulation of Jakobson's (1957) category of *status* (viz. the speaker's evaluation of the narrated event) as the grammatical category in question here. The basic opposition is one of personal confirmation (cf. Aronson 1967) or the withholding of personal confirmation (nonconfirmativity). Commonly attributed meanings such as *witnessed* and *reported*, respectively, which are attested in grammatical analyses at least as far back as the eleventh century (Dankoff 1982:412), are not inherent in the meaning of the verbal form but rather are conditioned by the context in which these forms occur. Thus it is normal for a speaker to personally confirm the truth-value of a personally witnessed event, just as under normal conversational circumstances that speaker will withhold such confirmation if there is a desire to make it clear that the source is a report. Nonetheless, a speaker can personally vouch for the truth of an unwitnessed event or express amazement at (i.e. previous unwillingness to confirm) a witnessed event by the choice of verb form.² What is particularly salient about status in the languages under consideration here is the fact that it is the tense form alone that carries the kind of meaning that, e.g., in English must be rendered lexically or intonationally, e.g. by the adverb *apparently*, although the affirmative use of *do* as in *I do believe in ghosts* does reflect a kind of grammaticalized status category. In this article, we shall be examining only those parts of the respective systems relevant for the investigation of gnomic language.³

² Moreover, when nonconfirmativity is the contextual variant meaning of a perfect or unmarked past, then the verb form can be used for, e.g., witnessed resultativity.

³ Thus, for example, although futures and pluperfects enter into status oppositions, they will not be considered here since they are extremely rare in proverbs. Similarly, although conditionals do occur in proverbs, as in (i), they are

In Balkan Slavic (Macedonian and Bulgarian), Turkish, and Georgian, there is an opposition between an explicitly confirmative past tense of the simple preterit type and a past tense of the perfect type that implies nonconfirmativity in context. In the case of Balkan Slavic the confirmative past (sometimes called the *definite past*) has an imperfect/aorist aspectual opposition. In Turkish, the past tense marker in *-di* by itself corresponds to the Balkan Slavic aorist, but this marker can also function as an auxiliary combining with a number of affixes, including *-yor*, which produces an imperfect. In Georgian, the aorist and imperfect are members of different series, and only the aorist is confirmative. The Balkan Slavic unmarked past is descended from the old perfect using the former resultative participle in *-l*.⁴ This paradigm (sometimes called the *indefinite past*), formed with the present tense of 'be' plus this *l*-form has 'nonconfirmative' as its chief contextual, but not invariant, meaning, in opposition to the marked confirmative (see Friedman 1988).⁵ It also has an aorist/imperfect opposition. The Turkish perfect in *-miş* is similarly not marked for confirmativity vis-à-vis *-di* and generally therefore implies nonconfirmativity, albeit again this is contextual and not invariant (see Friedman 1978, also Johanson 1971: 284-300). As with *-di*, it can combine with *-yor* to produce an imperfect. The Georgian perfect (*turmeobiti*, from *turme* 'apparently') is likewise generally nonconfirmative. It is a member

relatively rare and the modal categories thus expressed are outside considerations of indicative status that are of concern here.

(i) a. Mac. *Ako 'i slušaše gospod kučinjana, pastrma ke vrneše.* (Kavaev 1961:12)

b. Blg. *Da beše slušal gospod kučetata, ot nebeto pastırma šteše da vali.* (Ikononov 1968:59)

c. Trk. *Köpeğin duası kabul olsa, gökten pastırma yağar.* (ibid.)

d. Alb. *Po të dëgjonte perëndia galat, behar s'vinte kurrë.* (ibid.)

If God listened to [the prayers of] dogs, it would rain dried beef.

(Alb. 'If God listened to jackdaws, summer would never come.')

⁴ In Bulgarian it is still a participle, in Macedonian it is restricted to analytic tenses and moods.

⁵ In Bulgarian, the auxiliary can be omitted in the third person. It is claimed in Bulgarian prescriptive grammar that the omission of the auxiliary signals reportedness and its presence constitutes the perfect. An examination of the data shows, however, that this is not always the case. Thus auxiliary omission in the third person cannot be taken as paradigm-forming. The question does not arise in standard Macedonian, where the auxiliary never occurs in the third person. (See Friedman 1982a, 1988 and Fielder 1995, 1997 for details.)

of the third conjugational series and thus differs syntactically from both the aorist and imperfect. (cf. Friedman 1988, also Harris 1985:295-306, Boeder Forthcoming.) Unlike the foregoing languages, Albanian has only a marked nonconfirmative, which is diachronically of perfect origin, the so-called admirative (*habitore* from *habi* 'surprise'). The admirative occurs as a true present, imperfect, perfect, and pluperfect, but not in the aorist (see Friedman 1981, 1982b). Lak has a number of synthetic and analytic paradigms that render varying degrees of confirmative and non-confirmative status, respectively. Of interest to us here are the marked assertive in *-ssa*, the unmarked perfect, and the nonconfirmative perfect using the past gerund and the present tense of 'be' (see Friedman 1989, 1994).

2. THE PROVERB

The normal tense in gnomic language is the unmarked, i.e. some form of present tense in the languages under consideration here, and consequently marked tenses (generally past) are relatively rare. As indicated above, however, it is precisely for this reason that when these marked forms do occur in proverbs, their usage is particularly significant in revealing their positions in their respective systems. The use of past tense forms in gnomic language is of interest not only because proverbs constitute special marked contexts, and moreover function as complete texts in and of themselves (cf. Norrick 1985:3, Spasov, Topolińska, and Spasov 1986:10, 47), but also because, as a folklore genre, they represent spontaneous creations of a speech community. Thus, in parallel proverbs in various languages, the choice of tense form is indicative of the manner in which the categories marked by those forms fit into the specific linguistic system of the community as a whole rather than the choice of an individual translator. Also, by their very nature as oral creations containing their own contexts, proverbs provide unique insight into colloquial linguistic structure. Conclusions about spoken language can thus be drawn on the basis of relatively short segments of written text.

The term *proverb* itself, however, requires some clarification. Norrick (1985:78) gives a definition of the proverb worth citing here: "The proverb is a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning." By *didactic* Norrick also understands 'evaluative' or 'potentially didactic'. By *general* he means that a proverb is not specifically tied into the rest of the

context of the utterance, although by the rules of ordinary conversation it will be relevant to it. Thus sayings and expressions such as examples (1) or (2) although they are included in collections of proverbs, are not gnomic in the sense used here; example (1) is not didactic while example (2) is not general. Similarly, example (3) is clearly a slogan and not a proverb despite its inclusion in a collection of Albanian proverbs.⁶

- (1) Blg. *Jade kato vrŭkolak*. (Arnaudov 1963:500)
He eats like a vampire.
- (2) Blg. *Xubav kato prase v pomija*. (Arnaudov 1963:472)
As beautiful as a pig in slops.
- (3) Alb. *Lenini është diell e hënë*. (Panajoti and Xhagolli 1983:47)
Lenin is the sun and moon.

On the other hand, punch lines of well known anecdotes can have the evaluative and general content of proverbs, and can function as complete contexts in the cultures where they are known. Such is the case, for example, with the punch lines of many Nasreddin Hodja stories, which function as proverbs from the Balkans to Xinjiang, e.g., example (4):⁷

- (4) Alb. *Ish kanë taksirati i jorganit tim*. (Çetta 1979:161).
Blg. *Za našata čerga bila razpjata*. (Ikonomov 1968:90)
Lak *...ššala dă'vi žula virğandaluja bivk'un bijača*. (Xalilov and Xajdakov 1989:201)

⁶ Another point which must be mentioned is that fact that as folklore, proverbs are frequently cited in the dialectal form in which the collector heard them. In some cases, this could be significant if the verbal categories in the dialect differ significantly from those in the literary language. This problem does not arise here, however. The problem of the archaic nature of proverbs is likewise not a problem in this study. Proverbs are frequently archaic in their lexicon and word order, but the grammatical categories they express (except in very rare cases, e.g., English second singular) are contemporary. Proverbs here are cited exactly as they occur in the sources except for the use of standard transliterations for non-Latin alphabets. In the case of multiple citations, minor differences in meaning will be ignored in the English translations but more significant lexical differences will be noted. English proverbial equivalents or didactic messages will occasionally be cited after translations for clarification.

⁷ In this story, the Hodja hears a loud quarrel outside his door in the middle of the night and wraps himself in a blanket and goes downstairs to find out what is the matter. One of the two men grabs his blanket and they both run off, and the Hodja explains it to his wife using (4).

Trk. *Kavga bizim yorgannın üstüne imiş* (Ikonov 1968:90)
 The quarrel was about our blanket. (= Mind your own business.)

In contradistinction to English, on which Norrick based his study, the languages of the Balkans and the Caucasus make more frequent use of punch lines as proverbs as well as of proverbs that constitute one sentence anecdotes, e.g., example (5):

- (5) Blg. *Vidjala žabata će kovat bivola, i tja navirala kraka.* (Ikonov 1968:42)
 Geo. *Bedaurebsa č'edden baq'aq'mac pexi aišvirao.* (Tschenkéli 1958:76)
 Mac. *Videla žabata deka bivolo go kovat i sama dignala nogata* (Penušliski 1969:33)
 Trk. *Öküze nal çakırdığını görmüş, kurbağa da ayağını kaldırmış.* (ibid.)
 The frog saw them showing the ox and lifted its foot, too. (= Know your place.)

Such gnomish punch lines and one-liners are included in the data used for this paper.

3. THE DATA

Let us now turn to the data themselves. As the initial corpus for my investigation, I took Ikonov (1968), which contains approximately 2700 Bulgarian and Macedonian proverbs with equivalents in the various Balkan languages, including about 1250 in Turkish and 330 in Albanian. I also consulted individual collections of proverbs⁸. In the corpora that I

⁸ Arnaudov (1963) for Bulgarian, Panajoti & Xhagolli (1983) for Albanian, and Tülbentçi (1969) for Turkish contain about 15,000 entries each. Gvardžaladze and K'usrašvili. (1976) for Georgian contains about 2,000 entries. For Macedonian I used Penušliski (1969) with about 3,500, Cepenkov ((1972) with about 5,000, Kavaev (1961) with about 4,300, and Spasov, Topolińska, Spasov (1986) with about 200. For Lak I was limited to about 100 proverbs from Xajdakov (1986:11 4-17), Xajdakov and Žirkov (1962), and Xalilov and Xajdakov (1989). Tonnet (1990) has some interesting material, but my references are rather to the original sources. Papahagi (1908) is a valuable source on Balkan phraseology, but most of his citations do not qualify as proverbial according to

examined, the use of marked past tense forms was expectedly rare but surprisingly consistent: between approximately three and six percent of the total in each case. This was even true of the corpus of English proverbs used by Norrick (1985).

3.1 *Balkan Slavic.*

Beginning with the Macedonian and Bulgarian, even a simple count of the types of past tense forms occurring in Cepenkov (1972) and Ikonov (1968), respectively, is highly suggestive, as can be seen from Tables One and Two:

	total	1&2 person	3 person
definite past	57	13	44
indefinite past	124	6	116
total	192	19	162

Table 1 Macedonian

	total	1&2person	3 total	3+aux	3+Ø
definite past	42	21	21	N/A	N/A
indefinite past	117	14	103	20	83
total	159	35	124	20	83

Table 2 Bulgarian

For Bulgarian, almost three-quarters of the forms are indefinite pasts, almost 90% of those are third person, and 80% of those have no auxiliary, i.e. they constitute over half the total of Bulgarian gnomic past tense forms. In the definite past, by contrast, half the forms are marked persons, i.e. first or second. The Macedonian figures are similar, with almost two-thirds of the total being indefinite pasts (and more than 95% of those third person) and almost three-quarters of the definite pasts being marked persons.

3.2 *Turkish.*

In contradistinction to the Balkan Slavic data, the Turkish data from Ikonov (1968) show that the *di*-pasts and *miş* pasts have a more equal

our definition. Some individual proverbs are taken from other sources and so noted.

distribution than the corresponding definite and indefinite pasts. Moreover, the total number of *di*-pasts is greater than that of *miş* pasts, and the marked persons (first and second) occur more frequently in the *miş*-past, where they constitute a greater percentage of that paradigm. This can be seen from Table Three.

	total	1&2 person	3 person
di-past	44	9	35
miş past	32	12	20
total	76	21	55

Table 3 Turkish

The comparison of Balkan Slavic and Turkish data is especially interesting in view of the influence of Turkish on Balkan Slavic (cf. Friedman 1978), especially that which is claimed both for the verbal system and for Bulgarian proverbs (cf. Conev 1934:335-36). While it is true that many proverbs do agree in verb form, as is the case in examples (4), (5), and (6), there are also numerous non-correspondences as illustrated by examples (7)-(10), and, in principle, (11).

- (6) Blg. *Edin lud xvŕlja kamŭk v geranja, četirese mŭdri ne mogat da go izvadjat.* (Ikonomov 1968:83)
 Mac. *Eden budala ŝčo ke zametkat, trista umni ne moŝet da go otmetkat.* (Penuŝliski 1969:52)
 Trk. *Bir deli bir kuyuya taŝ atmıŝ, kırk akıllı ıkaramamıŝ* (ibid.)
 Geo. *Ertma sulelma zĝvaŝi margalit'i gadaagdo da asma 'k'vianma ver amoıĝo.* (Gvardŝaladze and K'usraŝvili 1976:19)
 Lak *Dullunni zannal, dirunni vŕr'ux.* (Xajdakov1961:11 5)
 A fool threw a rock in the well, and forty (Mac. 300, Geo. 100) sages cannot get it out. (Lak 'The Lord gave and it went up the flue.')(= What is done cannot be undone.)⁹
- (7) Blg. *S xaram dojde, s xaram si otide.* (Ikonomov 1968:314)

⁹ Cf. Also the following Macedonian proverb, which is closer to the Lak:
 (ii) Mac. *Bog dal, bog zel.* (Spasov, Topolińska and Spasov 1986:14)
 God gave, God took away.

This example is sometimes used as an expression of comfort to the bereaved, but it can also have a meaning similar to (7). I would argue that the usage here reflects the older system in which the unmarked past was a perfect. (See also my comments in the conclusion).

- Trk. *Haram geldi, haram gitti.* (ibid.)
 Mac. *Kako dojde - taka otide.* (Spasov, Topolińska and Spasov 1986:15)
 Geo. *Armad naskotovni, armad c'avao.* (Gvardžaladze and K'urašvili 1976:108)
 Easy come, easy go.
- (8) Blg. *Türkölila se tendžerata, ta si namerila poxlupak.* (Ikononov 1968:259)
 Trk. *Tencere tekerlendi, kapıgını buldu.* (ibid.)
 Alb. *U rrungullis tenxherja gjeti kapaknë.* (ibid.)
 Mac. *Se strkalo grnčeto si go našlo poklopčeto.* (Foulon 1990:169)
 The pot rolled and found itself a lid. (= Birds of a feather flock together.)
- (9) Trk. *Süt içer iken ağzı yandı, yoğurdu üflüyor.* (Tülbentçi[1 4762]496)
 Blg. *Kojto se e izgoril s trienica, toj duha i na kiseloto mljako.* (Ikononov 1968:187)
 Alb. *U dogj nga qulli, i fryn edhe kosit.* (ibid.)
 Mac. *Koj se poparil od mlekoto, (toj) dúvat i na mŭščenicata.* (ibid.)
 Mac. *Izgorel od kafeto, pa duva i na rakijata.* (Foulon 1990:169)
 Geo. *Papit p'iradmc'vari dos uberavdao.* (Gvadžaladze and K'urašvili² 1976:242)¹⁰
 Burnt by (hot) milk/porridge/coffee, he blew on yoghurt/buttermilk/brandy. (= Once burnt, twice shy)
- (10) Blg. *Čakal si na majka si v korema devet meseca, a sega ne možeš da počakaš.* (Ikononov 1968:269)
 Trk. *Ananın karnında dokuz ay nasıl durdun.* (ibid.)
 Mac. *Trajal vo majka si devet meseci, da nekit da trait devet saati* (Cepenkov 1972:102[2496])
 You waited nine months in your mother's womb, but now you can't wait. (Trk. 'How did you [endure] stay[ing] in your mother's womb for nine months) (= Haste makes waste.)
- (11) Trk. *Ne vakıt bok sıçtı, na vakıt araba geçti.* (Ikononov 1968:306)
 When did the shit get shat, when did the cart pass?' (= Don't jump to conclusions)

¹⁰ The Georgian example here uses an imperfect, but there is a variant with the aorist:

(iii) Geo. *Dašinebulma dzağlma cxra c'elic'ads bučks uq'epao.* (Gvadžaladze and K'urašvili 1976:42)

The frightened dog howled at the bush for nine years.

In (4) and (5) the Balkan Slavic indefinite past corresponds to the Turkish *miş*-past. Both of these examples are the kind of narrative texts for which the nonconfirmative would be normal. Example (6) Also has a narrative use of the Turkish *miş*-past but the Balkan Slavic versions utilize the non-past, which is always available as an alternative. Of particular interest here are the Caucasian equivalents, which will be discussed below. The Balkan Slavic definite past corresponds to the expected Turkish *di*-past in example (7). Here the proverb is a commentary in which the speaker's personal confirmation of "the way things are" is likely to motivate the choice of tense form regardless of whether the actual events to which the proverb is applied are directly or indirectly known to the speaker. Examples (8) through (11), however, illustrate a fundamental difference between the Turkish and Balkan Slavic manipulation of status categories in gnomic language, a difference that is reflected in the figures in Tables One through Three. Examples (8) and (9) are treated as narrative texts like (4) and (5) in Balkan Slavic, but in Turkish they are presented as confirmative commentary. Similarly, in example (10), Balkan Slavic presents the event as a past narrative not requiring confirmation, whereas the Turkish version is actually phrased as a rhetorical question and uses the confirmative for what is assumed to be a universal truth. The fact that the *di*-past refers to confirmed rather than witnessed events is especially well illustrated by example (11), which requires some explanation. The proverb is the punch line of a story in which a cavalryman goes off to relieve himself, and as he is readjusting his uniform his sword cuts through the excrement that is lying on the ground behind him. Upon turning around and seeing the sliced feces, the soldier wrongly concludes that a cart must have passed by and exclaims (11). For our purposes, the point is that the use of the confirmative indicates that the *di*-past is being used to emphasize the soldier's conviction.

Examples (12) and (13) illustrate an important difference between Bulgarian and Turkish gnomic usage that provides support for a grammatical analysis I proposed in Friedman 1978. It has often been observed that the use of the Turkish copulative particle *-dir* with the third person of the *miş*-past to render a neutral past parallels the presence of the third person auxiliary in the Bulgarian indefinite past, as mentioned in note 5 (e.g. *yazmış/yazmıştır* : *pisal/pisal e* 'wrote/has written' 3sg). I have shown, however, that this is merely a superficial resemblance. The Bulgarian phenomenon is one of auxiliary loss, which was completely carried out in Standard Macedonian (and the western dialects on which it is

based) whereas the Turkish is a clitic particle that can be added to any person of many tenses (as well as to parts of speech other than the verb) as a kind of emphatic. This is exactly the type of difference that shows up in gnomic language, as illustrated by examples (12) and (13). The Turkish copulative clitic *-dir* does not occur at all in past-tense gnomic language, hence its absence in (12) where the Bulgarian indefinite past has the auxiliary (*vermiş* vs *e dal*). Turkish *-dir* is entirely normal in present tense gnomic use as the existential equivalent of other verbs in the so-called broad tense (*geniş zaman*), of which (13) is a typical example (here *gibidir* corresponds to *e kato* and *konar* to *kacva*):

- (12) Blg. *Bog e dal usta na glupcite za da jadat, a ne da govorjat.*
(Ikonov 1968:310)
Trk. *Sersemle allah ağız vermiş, yalnız yemek için - lâf etmek için değil.* (ibid.)
God gave (has given) fools mouths for eating, not for speaking.
- (13) Blg. *Ljubovta e kato muxa: i na med kacva i na govno kacva.*
(Ikonov 1968:139)
Trk. *Sevda sinek gibidir, bala da konar, boka da konar.* (ibid.)
Love is like a fly: It lands on honey and it lands on shit. (= Love is blind.)

The fact that *-dir* never occurs in past tense gnomic use is indicative of the difference between the addition of the particle *-dir* to the Turkish *miş* past on the one hand and the omission of the Bulgarian third person auxiliary in the indefinite past on the other. The absence of *-dir* from past tense proverbs is also significant in contrast with the usage in Caucasian languages, to be discussed below.

3.3. Albanian and Georgian.

As we have seen, Turkish shows a tendency to balance out confirmative and nonconfirmative pasts in gnomic usage. The Albanian and Georgian data differ even more significantly from the Balkan Slavic. As can be seen from Table Four, aorists comprise the overwhelming majority of past tense

forms and are much more common than the Bulgarian definite past or the Turkish *di*-past.¹¹

	aurist	imperfect	perfect	admirative	total
Albanian	151	12	24	7	194
Georgian	34	4	12	N/A	50

Table 4 Albanian and Georgian

Example (14), in which the Balkan Slavic indefinite pasts and Turkish *miş*-past correspond to Albanian and Georgian aorists, is typical in this respect.¹²

- (14) Blg. *Prismjalo se gŭrneto na kotleto, e mu e erno dupeto.*
 (Ikonomov 1968:209)
 Trk. *Arap araba kara demiř.* (ibid.)
 Alb. *Qeshi i ndyri tē ndyrin.* (ibid.)
 Mac. *Prismejal se cerep na grneto zařto nema uho* (Spasov, Topolińska and Spasov 1986:17).¹³
 Geo. *Ĝorma gkoters utxra: ře drunianoo.* (Gvardžaladze and K'usrařvili 1976:295)
 The pot called the kettle black.

¹¹ In addition to Ikonomov (1968), the sources for the data in Table Three are the first six thousand entries in Panajoti & Xhagolli (1983) for Albanian and the complete text of Gvardžaladze and K'usrařvili (1976) for Georgian.

¹² Examples (5) through (7) for Georgian and (8) and (9) for Albanian also use aorists. See also example (ii).

¹³ But cf. also the following variant, which uses a definite past:

(iv) Mac. *Mu se posmea kurvata na orospijata* (Cepenkov 1972:68)

The slut laughed at the whore.

This example, however, appears to be from Bitola, as evidenced by the use of the masculine clitic pronoun *mu* to refer to the feminine noun *orospija*, a gender-neutralization that is characteristic of the southwestern-most Macedonian dialects due to Aromanian and Albanian influence. A specific feature of the Bitola town dialect that is also attributed to Aromanian is the use of the definite past where other dialects would use the indefinite past (see Koneski 1967:III, 148). Given where Cepenkov was collecting his material, this probably accounts for the form here.

In both Albanian and Georgian the use of the imperfect is not particularly significant. It is used most often due to the semantics of the verb, which is generally 'be' or 'have', as in the Georgian example (15):

- (15) Geo. *Q'avš tvali ar eba, - ğmerts c'amc'ams stxovda!* (Tschenkéli 1958:261)
 The raven had [imperfect] no eyes - yet it begged [imperfect] God for eyelashes! (= Seeking that which is useless in a time of need)

Like the imperfect in both languages, the Albanian perfect is not marked for status. Albanian gnomic perfects are purely resultative, as in example (16):

- (16) Blg. *Kojto e posejal, šte žüne.* (Ikonov 1968:121)
 Alb. *Kush ka mbjellë, do të kornjë.* (ibid.)
 Mac. *Što baral toa i našol.* (Cepenkov 1972:111[2736])¹⁴
 Who has sown shall reap. (= Reap as ye have sown; Mac. 'He found what he was looking for.')

The Georgian perfect is described as being used for unwitnessed events, but it is also the normal choice in otherwise unmarked negative and interrogative sentences, as in examples (17) and (18).¹⁵

- (17) Geo. *Sopeli ert dĝes ar ašenebulao.* (Gvardžaladze, I. and M. K'usrašvili 1976:259)
 The village has not been built in a day. (= Rome was not built in a day)
- (18) Geo. *Tu p'ilp'ili ar gič'amia, p'iri ra gec'viso?* (Gvardžaladze and K'usrašvili 1976:303)

¹⁴ The Turkish equivalent uses a gnomic present:

(v) Trk. *Eken biçer, konan göçer* (Yurtbaşı 1993:311)

Who sows, reaps, who stops for the night travels on.

¹⁵ It should be noted here, however, that in Georgian there is a special quotative clitic particle, *-o*, which is usually used to indicate quoted, indirect, or reported speech, but is also almost always used at the end of proverbs, as it is in examples (5), (6), (7), (9), and (14). This may help to account for the paucity of perfects in Georgian proverbs.

If you have not eaten pepper, why is your mouth burning? (= Where there's smoke, there's fire)

In fact, even in examples such as (5), (6), and (14), as well as in (23), Georgian consistently uses the aorist where Balkan Slavic and/or Turkish use a nonconfirmative. These examples illustrate the basic fact that the status qualities of the Georgian aorist/perfect opposition, while bearing certain resemblances to the confirmative/nonconfirmative of Balkan Slavic and Turkish, nonetheless differ from them in some fundamental way, as reflected in gnomic usage. We shall return to this problem in the conclusion.

The Albanian admirative almost never occurs in gnomic speech. The few examples all involve some sort of quotation, as in example (19), where the Macedonian and Turkish equivalents use nonconfirmative narrative frames (Macedonian *rekla*, Turkish *dermiş* 'said/says'):

- (19) Alb. *Ariu s'i arrinte dot gorricat e thoshte: "Qenkan të papjekura!"*
(Panajoti and Xhagolli 1983:367)
Mac. *Ubo e grozjeto, ama ušče nezdrelo, rekla lisicata ko ne moela da go dosegnit* (Kavaev 1961:1 25(3731))
Trk. *Kedi ciğere yetişemezse "bugün oruçtur" dermiş* (Yurtbaşı 1993:389)
The bear could not reach the pears and said: "They are (admirative) unripe!" (Trk. If the cat cannot reach the liver he would say: "Today is a fast day.") (= Sour grapes.)¹⁶

Examples (20) through (22) are markedly nonconfirmative uses of the Balkan Slavic indefinite past of a type that would be admirative if translated into Albanian. In sentences (20) and (21), the usage is dubitative, i.e. a sarcastic repetition of a hypothetical previous statement, while in (22) the speaker is expressing amazement at the discovery of what he thinks to be a pre-existing state of affairs. In all three examples, the English translation can use either a present or a past tense, but in each case there is always some reference to an ontologically past statement or state of affairs (see

¹⁶ A similarly structured Lak proverb is the following:

(vi) Lak *Öl ttizin qqašajx~ukun, qö darkussa dur t'ar* (Xajdakov and Žirkov 1962:216)

Being unable to milk the cow, he says the courtyard is crooked.
(= The bad workman blames his tools.)

Friedman 1988 and Forthcoming). These are all narratives and punch lines of the same type as illustrated by (4) and (5):

- (20) Blg. *Ne štajal mŕtvijat da vlezje v raj!* (Ikonov 1968:162)¹⁷
 The dead man doesn't/said he didn't want to enter heaven! (= Maids say "Nay" and take it.)
- (21) Mac. *Šarenio vol ġoa imal poeġke loj.* (Cepenkov 1972:110)
 The piebald ox supposedly has/had more fat. (The neighbor's goose is fatter.)
- (22) Mac. *Kaurskite iminja site bile piši, piši.* (Kavaev 1961: 58)
 The infidels' (Christians') names are/were all Write, Write. (He who understands ill, answers ill.)¹⁸

3.4. Lak.

The available data for Lak are very limited, although the percentages of past tense forms are still in the same range: four out of one hundred. Even this limited sample, however, seems representative enough to be worth citing, especially since they were consistent and three of them — (4), (6), and (23) — have parallels elsewhere in our material. The Lak verbal system has a confirmative past, an assertive in -ssa that functions in past, present, and future tenses, and analytic pasts that can have nonconfirmative meaning. All three types are represented here, but each with a specific explanation. In the case of (4), the analytic perfect has the same nonconfirmative nuances as in Balkan Slavic and Turkish, which given the context of the narrative is to be expected. Example (6) uses two unmarked perfects as does (23) (lavgunni 'it went'), which also has an assertive present (qqabučajssar 'it does not come back'). This last form reflects the ordinary tense for Lak proverbs. The Georgian equivalent in (23) uses aorists and the quotative particle -o, while the Turkish uses the miş past:

¹⁷ The following Turkish proverb is similar:
 (vii) Trk. *İstemem, yan cebime koy.* (Yurtbaşı 1993:206)
 I don't want [it], put [it] in my side pocket.

¹⁸ This is a punch line. A Turkish tax collector came to a Macedonian Christian village during the Ottoman period and was writing down the name of each male head of household as he paid the tax. One by one they said: *Piši Marko.* 'Write [down] Marko.' *Piši Živko.* 'Write [down] Živko.' *Piši Stojan.* 'Write [down] Stojan.', etc. From this, the Turk concluded that all Christians were named *Piši* 'Write [down]'.

- (23) Geo. *Ierusalims niori gagzavnes, dabruna da isev q'ardao.*
(Gvardžaladze, I. and M. K'usrašvili 1976:291)
- Lak *Kä'valin lavgunni kunu laččul čimus nac'u x~unu qqabuč'ajssar.* (Xajdakov 1961:11 6)
- Trk. *Sarımsağı gelin etmişler, kırk gün kokusu çıkmamış*
(Yurtbaşı 1993:31)
- Geo. They sent garlic to Jerusalem, it came back and still stank; Lak Garlic went to the Ka'aba, but it does not return sweet; Trk. They made garlic the bride and the smell lasted for forty days.¹⁹ (= The leopard cannot change his spots)

It is interesting to note that while Lak has quotative particles similar to Georgian, e.g. *t'ar* cited in example (vi), they are not normally used in proverbs except when the proverb itself calls for reported speech, like the Turkish equivalent *der[miş]* in example (19).

4. CONCLUSION

As the foregoing material makes clear, there exist significant differences among the languages of the Balkans and the Caucasus in the gnomic use of past tense forms that enter into status oppositions, despite superficial similarities in the descriptions of these forms and oppositions. The Balkan Slavic indefinite past (especially without the auxiliary in the case of Bulgarian), the Turkish *miş*-past, the Albanian admirative, the Georgian perfect, and the Lak analytic perfect are all described as nonconfirmative, or even reported. In parallel with this, the Balkan Slavic definite past, Turkish *di*-past, and Georgian aorist are all described as confirmative, or even witnessed, to which can be added the two degrees of confirmativity of Lak (assertive and confirmative). Nonetheless, in gnomic speech the nonconfirmative is the most frequent in Bulgarian and

¹⁹ The Balkan Slavic equivalents use conditionals, a similar Turkish proverb has a gnomic present:

(viii) Mac. *Magare na adžilūk da ojt, pak magare ke si ostanit.*

(Kavaev 1961:74(1896).

Blg. *Magareto i na xadžilūk da xodi, a pak magare se vrūšta.*

(Ikononov 1968:140)

Trk. *Deve Kabe'ye gitmekle hacı olmaz.* (Yurtbaşı 1993:43)

Even if the jackass goes on a pilgrimage it comes back a jackass.

(Trk. When the camel goes to the Ka'aba it does not become a pilgrim.)

Macedonian, whereas in Turkish there is no great difference between the two status forms, although the confirmative is slightly more common. In Georgian, however, the form said to be marked as witnessed, i.e. the aorist, is by far the most common, and in Lak, it is the assertive that is the normal tense (Xajdakov 1961:11 5), and the unmarked perfect also occurs. In Albanian, the markedly nonconfirmative admirative is almost never encountered, as is also the case with marked nonconfirmative usage in Balkan Slavic, where such usage always contains an element of irony and/or humor.²⁰

The differences in status usage among the various languages considered here can be explained by the position of status in each language's respective system vis-à-vis the context of gnomic usage as described by Norrick (1985:27/29): "Speakers often resort to proverbs in double bind situations, e.g. when they are called upon for a judgment that might hurt another's feelings or reveal their own private preferences. Research shows that speakers cite proverbs to avoid personal commitment and refutation. ... So the traditional character of proverbs imbues their ideational meanings with authority and lends their directive interactional meanings force, while allowing the speaker himself to fade into general community opinion."

If we accept Norrick's idea that proverbs are used to simultaneously assert authority while avoiding personal commitment, then the solutions to the double bind presented by the gnomic context on the one hand and the grammatically encoded status oppositions of the languages in question on the other appear to reflect different semantic interpretations of the confirmative/nonconfirmative opposition, which in turn may result from differences in diachronic development. Macedonian and Bulgarian are unique among the languages considered here in that their forms not marked for confirmation are most frequent in gnomic past tense usage. I would argue that this is related to the fact that the fully grammaticalized opposition confirmative/nonconfirmative in Balkan Slavic is relatively recent, and moreover it is confirmativity which is marked in the definite past, while nonconfirmativity is a contextual variant meaning in the unmarked (indefinite) past. Thus gnomic past tense usage in these languages prefers the unmarked to the confirmative past. Albanian represents a mirror image

²⁰ Thus, for example, in both (20) and (21) the verb form reflects the ironic commentary of the narrator of the proverb, whereas in (22) — and also in (4) — the speaker of the proverb is quoting someone else, and in so doing is inviting the addressee to share in a humorous response.

situation, since the marked nonconfirmative (admirative) appears to be of about the same age as the rise of status oppositions in Balkan Slavic,²¹ gnomic usage again prefers the unmarked past. The one exception is when the norm is to be explicitly violated because the value of irony is the focus of the expression. The argument for Georgian is not dissimilar from that for Albanian. The relative recency of the rise of nonconfirmativity in the perfect (see Harris 295-306) combined with the use of the quotative particle *-o* favors the use of the aorist as relatively more neutral, albeit confirmative. The effect so rendered would be exactly that described by Norris. The situation in Lak is similar. Here the assertive present in *-ssa* is likewise the normal tense of proverbs. This is consistent with the use of the assertive for neutral, bureaucratic style as the tense of general truth (cf. Friedman 1994). Historical arguments are not available for Lak due to lack of evidence, but the existence of a grammaticalized assertive that is contextually more neutral than the confirmatives of the languages considered thus far could be relevant. This leaves Turkish, in which the status oppositions are the oldest attested. In Turkish, both types of past tense are used with almost equal frequency, but it is noteworthy that there is a tendency to use the confirmative form; and it is especially noteworthy that the most strictly neutral past form, viz. *miş*-past plus *-dir*, does not occur, although the emphatic copulative *-dir* is normal with the present tense. Johanson (1971) argues for an essentially aspectual opposition between the *di*-past and the *miş*-past, and indeed the relative similarity in distributions suggests that status is not the primary consideration. This may, in fact, be due to the relatively context-dependent nature of status oppositions in Turkish.

In all cases, it should be noted that although proverbs by their nature tend to archaism, nonetheless the usage as we see it in modern collections does not violate current grammatical norms and is in keeping with modern structural tendencies. Thus, a comparative study of past tense gnomic usage in Balkan and Caucasian languages with status oppositions reveals fundamental differences in the meaning and deployment of the opposition

²¹ There is considerable debate surrounding the role of Turkish in the rise of status oppositions in both Albanian and Balkan Slavic. Regardless of whether the Balkan linguistic innovations represent grammatical calques on Turkish or internal developments of pre-existing tendencies that were influenced by Turkish, however, it is clear from the Slavic and Turkish textual evidence and arguable from the Albanian textual evidence that status was already an established grammatical category in Turkish centuries before its rise in the Indo-European Balkan languages (see Friedman 1986, Forthcoming).

confirmative/nonconfirmative, differences connected both with the nature of the gnomic context, the markedness relations within each language's system, and, I would argue, with the language-specific history of status oppositions that led to the respective markedness relations. As a textually self-contained genre, proverbs reveal significant aspects of grammatical structure relating to speaker evaluation.

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