

Encyclopedia of Eastern Europe

From the Congress of Vienna to
the Fall of Communism

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Garland Publishing, Inc.
A member of the Taylor & Francis Group
New York & London
2000

Poulton, Hugh. *Who Are the Macedonians?* Bloomington, Indiana, 1995.

See also Balkan Wars; Bucharest, Treaty of (1913); Congress of Berlin; Ethnic Minorities; Great Powers; Greek Civil War; IMRO; Ilinden Uprising

Macedonian Language

South Slavic language in the Slavic group of the Indo-European family, whose closest relatives are Serbian and Bulgarian. Ancient Macedonian is a dead Indo-European language of uncertain affiliation and may or may not have been closely related to Greek. Modern Macedonian is descended from the dialects spoken by those Slavic tribes that settled during the sixth and seventh centuries on the territory of geographic Macedonia (defined by Mount Olympus, the Pindus range, the southern and western shores of Lakes Prespa and Ohrid, Mounts Šar, Osogovo, Rila, and Dospat to the Mesta River).

The modern Macedonian literary language, which is the official language of the Republic of Macedonia, is based on the dialects of that country's west central region, roughly defined by the towns of Veles, Prilep, Bitola, and Kičevo, although elements from other dialects were also incorporated. This language is also taught in schools through grade four in the Prespa region of southeastern Albania. Official Bulgarian policy treats Macedonian as a dialect of Bulgarian, which is comparable to claiming Norwegian is a dialect of Danish. In Greece, Macedonian has never been permitted in any form of public or private discourse, although it continues to be spoken in parts of Greek Macedonia.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the modern Bulgarian and Serbian literary languages took shape, Macedonians also attempted to create a literary language based on their speech, as seen in texts such as Gjorgji Pulevski's (1838–94) trilingual dictionary published in 1875 and Krste Misirkov's (1874–1926) *Za makedonkite raboti* (*On Macedonian Matters*, 1903). Because of political factors, however, Macedonian did not receive official recognition and thus did not begin to achieve codification until 1944 in what was then Yugoslav Macedonia. Macedonian was taught as a minority language in Bulgarian Macedonia from 1946 to 1948. Attempts were also made to open Macedonian schools in

Greek Macedonia in the nineteenth century and during the Greek civil war in the 1940s.

Macedonian shares many features with the non-Slavic Balkan languages with which it has been in contact over the centuries. The following characteristics are unique to literary Macedonian, as opposed to other Slavic literary languages: the sounds /k/ and /g/, which have a dorso-palatal articulation; three definite articles, in *-t-*, *-n-*, and *-v-*, such as *knigata* (the book), *knigava* (this here book), *knigana* (that there book); a series of perfect tenses using the auxiliary *ima* (have) and the neuter verbal adjective, such as *imam dojdeno* (I have come); obligatory pronouns agreeing with definite direct and all indirect objects, such as *mu go dadov molivot na momčeto* (I gave the pencil to the boy); and specific words such as *bara* (seek), *saka* (want, like), *zbor* (word).

Victor A. Friedman

Further reading

Friedman, Victor A. "Macedonian," in *The Slavonic Languages*, ed. by B. Comrie and G. Corbett. London, 1993, 249–305.

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Ilievski, Petar. "The Position of the Ancient Macedonian Language and the Modern Name *Makedonski*." *Balkanistica* 10 (1997): 227–40.

Lunt, Horace. "On Macedonian Language and Nationalism." *Slavic Review* 45 (1986): 729–34.

Macedonian Literature

Literary achievements in the Macedonian language shared the fate of the Macedonian people and became the expression of that fate—subjection under Ottoman rule, forced assimilation in the new Balkan states, and nonrecognition as an independent entity. Only as late as 1945, with the final liberation of Vardar (Yugoslav) Macedonia, did the necessary conditions arise for the creation of literature in the Macedonian language.

The first literary attempts to write in the popular speech appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These works became the foundation of the modern Macedonian language and literature. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Joakim Krčovski (d. 1820) and Kiril Pečinović (1770–1845) wrote mainly religious and didactic prose works in the popular vernacular. In