# The Goran Enclave in Kosovo: Language Data for Identity

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**Key-words:** *enclave, Balkans, Gora region, Slavonic Muslim community, mother tongue, contact zone*

*Enclave* is a term of political geography which came to be used via the diplomatic jargon from French as the lingua franca for this sociolect (Fr. *enclave* < Lat. *clavus* > *inclavo* 'captive, imprisoned'). It signifies a 'territory whose geographical boundaries lie entirely within the boundaries of another territory'.

There exist *historical* and *contemporary enclaves*. Their main characteristic is the fact that they represent closed isolated areas with a *distinctive culture*. According to the UNESCO definition, which is operational in cultural anthropology, *culture* is the multitude of diverse distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a given *society* or of a social *group*. The concept covers, besides art, the way of life, forms of cohabitation, systems of values, traditions and beliefs. All these are expressed through *language* (see: UNESCO). Any action that comes into conflict with the culture of a given society or goup leads to *enclavization.*

Political discourse also operates with the notion of *ethnic enclave*, which defines an ethnic community within the area of another, dominant ethnic community. In an ethnic enclave the entity (community) preserves its cultural differences. From the territorial point of view, the enclave can be a district, an area or an administrative unit. It has *its own language*. It may also have its own peculiar economic system. Ethnic enclaves may appear by coercive means, as the result of racial or confessional discrimination. These are the well-known *ghettos*.

There are also *economic enclaves*. They represent an instrument of politics and are an object of international law. Some controversial notions of this paradigm are: *diaspora* (< Gr. *διασπορά* 'scattering, dispersion') – a term signifying 'an insulated ethnic community which lives outside its historical homeland / country', *ethnic minority*, and *ethnic/ linguistic island*. Enclaves have always existed and they exist today. These areas are not among the most desirable places to live. The language of their inhabitants speaks of *survival*.

*The following are the key concepts* defining enclaves and enclavization: migration, discrimination, racism, permanent conflict, in/non-tolerance, marginalization, risk zone, economic backwardness, demographic crisis, violation of human rights,

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restrictive agreements, ethnic media, lingua franca for business and social contacts, identity and community crises.

There are numerous enclaves scattered in the Balkans, both in the diachronic and synchronic aspect. The study of these enclaves has become topical since the democratic changes in Eastern Europe and following the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The Kosovo crisis in 1999 led to the creation of new enclaves, dynamic in number and status.

The object of this paper is the *Gora enclave* in the Western Balkans, a part of the global Bulgarian diaspora. Our field work/research in Kosovo dates back to 2009 and we are still in contact with this enclave.

Only lately, mostly as a result of objective causes, has this area become an object of interest for researchers. The scarcity of field data for about half of a century has been partly balanced by some local initiatives which resulted in the publication of collective and individual works (Dokle 2007 et al.).

By the end of the twentieth century, after the breakup of Tito's Yugoslavia, Gora had become an object of research for Serbian scholars. The results were presented at the interdisciplinary round table in 2000 in Belgrade. The subtitle of the collective volume issued two years later is representative: *Goranies, Muslims and Turks in the Šar (Shar) Mountain Župas (Parishes) of Serbia: Problems of the Actual Living and Survival Conditions* (Goranies 2002). The next similar Belgrade project was issued under a title even more emblematic of the social-political situation: *Kosovo and Metohija. Living in the Enclave*. Its results were published in Belgrade in 2007 (Kosovo 2007). One can estimate the politicized discourse in the theses in these volumes.

At the same time Bulgarian scholars from Sofia University and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences involved in the study of Balkan diasporas started their work as part of the international project *Balkan traditions: a community of cultures, religions and languages* with the contribution of impartial Serbian Balkanologists. As part of this project, Sofia hosted the 2005 international conference on the topic of Bulgarian islands in the Balkans followed by the publication of a volume with the same title (Ostrovi 2007). As part of this project, research is being carried out in the Albanian part of Gora by Petja Asenova, the director of the project. The researcher describes the dialect of the Albanian Gora (Kukës) as an *isolated Bulgarian dialect* (Asenova 2005: 73–78).

Today, within the large-scale European project *Kleiner Balkansprachatlas,* research is being conducted by Balkanologists in that area under the guidance of Andrei Sobolev.

In 2007 an ambitious still ongoing project was started at Shumen University: *Ethnopolitics of language and languages of politics in the Balkans*. We utilize an interdisciplinary approach; the data base includes all information sources. The scholarly methodology has been taken from cultural anthropology, contact linguistics, social psychology, etc. The linguistic objectives of this project are synchronized with other European projects – *Kleiner Balkansprachatlas*, in Balkan studies, and EUROJOS (*Językowo-kulturowy obraz świata Słowian i ich sąsiadów na tle porównawczym*), oriented toward Slavonic studies.



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The enclave character of Gora owes its existence mostly to various factors which relate to problems of community identity:

− natural causes (characteristics of the relief);

− still active long and complex inner and outer-external dynamic social phenomena.

These factors influence in various ways the living standard in the community, which can be best defined as *struggle for survival*.

Today the community inhabits the periphery areas of three young multiethnic states: Kosovo (Prizren Gora), Albania (Kukës Gora) and two villages in Macedonia (Urvich and Jelovene). This fact does not represent an obstacle for communication for the population in this periphery. From a geographical perspective, this is a *naturally isolated area,* which contributed to its enclavization in the past. Gora is difficult to reach. It is surrounded by the high mountain ranges of Shar Planina, Vratsa, Korab and Koritnik. It has also water boundaries – the rivers Beli Drin, Bistrica, Mlika and other tributaries of the Plava River.

The landscape is one of the causes of the poor infrastructure and the related *economic marginalization* of this area. This fact generated the outer and inner *forced migration* of the population. Life in the village, within the traditional paradigm of a closed community, is replaced by a different type of living. Before migration, working-age men migrated in several stages, a process known as *gurbetchijstvo* (‘leaving in order to earn’) with their sons, whereas today we are faced with the migration of whole families. The connection with one’s kin was made by new houses built as a sign of prosperity and by the yearly summer holiday spent in the home village, tightly connected to the traditional festivals, commonly turned into a marriage season. This type of *family culture* is still preserved, connections between relatives and co-villagers, independent of their location, are very strong. *Communication in the mother tongue* is compulsory in the community.

Most of the territory inhabited by the community lies in Kosovo, which represents the arena of long continuing ethnic conflicts. The nativity trend in Kosovo and the turning of the demographic factor into politics represent the cause of the emergence of villages with mixed population, as well as the cause of the *new enclavization* of the area. *The albanization* of Gora is increasingly stronger. One factor is the Albanian “wedge” in Opole, between Dragash Gora and Zhupa. The municipal centre of Dragash is already dominated by Kosovars. The new “patriotic mainstream” (Prizren – Durrës), which gives Kosovo access to the Adriatic Sea, and represents an economic enclave, gives a further push to the Albanization of Gora.

Moreover, all this is accompanied by *intolerance.* Ethnic *pressure* is triggered by economic pressure, which substitutes the significant local community symbols of material culture and traditional means of sustenance, such as *Sharplaninska brynza*, *byurek* (tasty salted pie), *boza* (a thick sweet-sour drink made of millet), *halva* (a special yellow-white Oriental sweet made of sunflower seeds or sesame), *kebapcheta* (spicy thick mince-meat coal-roasted fingers) and even *building* as a “trade mark” for whole generations. The Hashim and Agim Ceku companies are turning the Gora enclave from a cultural into an economic one by means of the region-specific typical economic instruments – drugs and illegal trafficking.



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It is difficult to make an estimate of the number of *the community members* today. The data for 1981, 1991 and 2002 point to a tendency toward a rather puzzling decrease. This is a result not only of the increasing emigration, but also of the declaration of nationality, which depends on the social and economic climate in the country. The phenomenon of *skrivena manina* ('hidden nationality') of totalitarian Yugoslavia is still present in the social behavior of the members of the minority, who have taught themselves to mimic in order to survive and to get opportunities on the labor market. This has proved to be possible for the generations which have learned not only Serbian, but, above all, Albanian, against the official bilingualism stipulated in the 2008 Constitution of Kosovo (Koleva 2011: 78−90).

The continuously infringed ethnic and confessional pluralism, life under totalitarian ethno-confessional repressions forces the minority to infiltrate inside the majority; this conveniently counts as disintegration, as related to the community. In this situation, the Serbian community undergoes total enclavization. The 2011 European census played an important part in the economic and social planning, in the development of each state in Europe as a whole. The European Commission requires the census to resort to the same internationally recognized criteria. In order to avoid doubling, one takes into account the constant living in the given state longer than one year. The questions regarding ethnic belonging and religious denomination are not compulsory in the census. After the 2011 elections in Kosovo, the Committee charter regions of the European Commission (Europa 2011) has "noticed with concern that one witnesses a serious lack of dialogue and peaceful reconciliation between the ethnic groups, as well as a lack of protection and integration of minorities, particularly of the Kosovar Serbians" (art. 116). Moreover, the Committee, "has noted with great concern the repeated irregularities, illegal practices and the *falsification* during the latest election, which called for supplementary elections, and regretfully sees this as a clear sign of the incomplete electoral maturity of the state" (art. 117). Under such ignorance of the Constitution and some agreements, including the humanitarian Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Bulgarian community in Gora-Kosovo, as an object of pressure and manipulative interest from the side of the neighbors, until recently deprived of any support from Bulgaria, is getting more and more separated in the social perspective. Nevertheless, the Gora community does not lose its main characteristics as an ethnic group.

The processes of consolidation within the community on the whole territory come out as a reaction against disintegration and ethnic mimicry. They clearly illustrate the features of national revival – a movement which has not included Gora. An intelligentsia is being shaped, interest in local history is rising, books are being published, regional media appear, and, most importantly, money is being invested not only in new houses, but also in business initiatives, mostly in education. There is a solid interest in the study of the standard mother language and in getting education in Bulgaria. The reconnection to the severed homeland takes place by the increasingly active presence of democratic processes in the Balkans, initiated by the Bulgarian state. The presence of the Gora Association of Bulgarians in the world is a factor of the latest years. Despite the fact that, in the near past, Gora was considered to be a *Trojan horse* because of its survival behavior by ethnic mimicry, this enclave



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community is finding ways to cope with the dynamics of social time and to assert itself through a complex of original culture features.

The following primordial features characterize ethnic social connections trough:

– belief in a common origin and not necessarily through the fact of a common origin → myths of a common origin;

– memory, as supporting ethnicity – symbols, spiritual space, memories – rather not as a positive process, but as an interest in one's own identity;

– the presence of a collection of narratives which build the identity and are related to the genealogy of tradition and to the territory of the ancestors.

In practice, *ethnic identity* and *ethnic personality* clearly represent overlapping categories. The integrating forces which help to preserve the *ethnos*, to crystallize some knowledge about it and its tradition are: *language*; spiritual culture (traditions, customs and beliefs); *a common origin and historical memories*; *a common territory*. The most conservative are *traditions*, which have a synchretic character as a result of a *denominational code* that was changed, late and in a coercive manner, from paganism through orthodox Christianity to a heterodox Muslim practice. Under the condition of today's Albanization of Gora and the more recent Turkicization by a massive offensive of Turkish capital, Shiizm is an original "wall" for aggressive cultural influences. The behavior of ethnic identity shows an emphatic bent toward ritual; this is mostly true about ritual of the life cycle such as birth and circumcision, which are commonly performed before St. George's Day. The wedding ceremonies (although more modern on an everyday level) include deeply archaic, authentic magical and religious practices. Even though the economic and social life in the villages in Gora already belongs to the *autarchic* ('self-sufficient") type, the population maintaining active communication with the outer (globalized) world, there still is a "wall" between them and the people of neighboring villages.

*Linguistic behavior* as a generalization of ethnic personality is undoubtedly the most interesting of all. We accept the *mother language* of the Slavic population of Gore as *part of the Bulgarian-Macedonian dialect continuum* located in the contact zone between the two still large indigenous language continua – the Albanian one in the North-West and the Serbian one in the East. Diachronically, linguistic contacts took place with the Aromanian language, which one can see in onomastics, as well as with Turkish, which have again become active.

The "others", including the neighbors, use as ethnonyms a rather wide range of *exonyms* in regard to the Gora community:

– Albanians – *Goran* (*goranë*), *Torbesh* (*torbeshë*) and *Potur* (*poturë*);

– Serbians – *Gòranci*, *Boshnjaci*, *Turci*;

– Macedonians – *Makedonski pomaci*;

– Bulgarians – *Gòrani*.

*The language* spoken in Gore is called, by attributive derivation, *gorançe*, *gòranski*, *makedonski*, *pomashki*, *boshnjashki*, *arhaichna forma na bylgarskija ezik*, and the *alphabet* in use (Latin, in keeping with the Albanian model) – *goranica.* The community has a tolerant attitude only toward the names derived from the toponym Gora and it would rather use its own definition for the language - *gòrski*, by which it separates itself from the Serbians. Often in the communication with other communities



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it uses the collocation *star nash jezik* (‘our old language’) in designating the local mother tongue.

This complicated name loaded with possessive semantics casts a bridge to a unique ethnic self-definiton of the community and its language – *nàshinski* = *nàshinci* and *nàshinski*, corresponding to its alphabet – (*nàshenica*).

This *autonym* corresponds to the Albanian language, in which the adverbial radical *nashk* serves to mark the *Slavic element*, that is, the *non-Albanian* one, and it includes binary oppositions (Demiraj 2007):

– another origin: *Albanian ~ Slavic;*

– a language of a different origin: *Albanian ~ Slavic* (in a broad sense);

– another belief / denomination;

– traditions of life and representations of values: *Albanian ~ Slavic / Slavonic*;

– other cultural traditions / written culture: *Albanian ~ Slavonic / Slavic / an;*

– general / limited life living space = *‘neighbor’*.

The endonym (autonym) of *nashici* represents an ethnic marker of a small enclave community which survives in a complex, dynamic and not totally secured contact zone, under constant pressure from its neighbors, with whom it shares some common points in cultural contact:

– *a close language-linguistic relationship* – with the rest of the Slavic language in the area;

– *confessional similarity* – with the Albanian sea of Muslims.

Nevertheless, one can find a point of contact/crossing between two types of difference: all indigenous *ethnoi* belong to the complex ethno-linguistic concept of *Homo balkanicus.* At the same time, the ambivalent ethnic code also represents a high identification with the community, with all the community members. This is reflected in the semantics of the plural personal-pronominal form for the first person МЫ / ’we’ (= Я ‘I’ + ВЫ ‘you, thee’ + ОНИ ‘they’).

As a conclusion, language strengthens ethnic self-awareness/consciousness and the feeling of self-identity represents a part of collective identity. This can be represented by the following formula: *стоя зад тях* / *stoja zad tjah* (‘to stand by them’), which shows that the community can become monolithic even in its existence as an enclave.

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## The Goran Enclave in Kosovo: Language Data for Identity

Gora is an enclave on the territory of western Balkans (Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia). It is a region with a mixed population. The small community of Muslim Gorans speaks a Slavic idiom specific to the western Balkan area in which three large language continua are in contact: Albanian, Macedonian-Bulgarian and Serbian. The mother tongue of the Gorans is exclusively a home language. *Gorans* and the *Goran language* are concepts that bear an ethno-ideological content, at a time when politics has been accompanied by ethnic conflicts. The Goran community is determined by features that are common and value-laden for all speakers. This paper is a result of the author's current specialized research projects.



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