# STRATEGIES FOR CREATING AN EXPLANATORY BAYASH DICTIONARY IN SERBIA[1]

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**Abstract.** The Bayash are Roma ethnic groups speaking different dialects of the Romanian language and living on the territory of many European states. The Bayash dialects cannot be considered a language of its own, since they preserved the crucial features of the Romanian language, the most important changes occurring in the lexicon. The article takes into discussion the possible elaboration of an explanatory Bayash dictionary in Serbia and tries to offer some analytical perspectives. The author suggests that such a dictionary cannot be a general normative document, but, inevitably, a dialectal dictionary, being based upon one of the varieties. She also proposes the use of a Romanian-based phonetic transcription, which would enable the comparison between her results and those of other Romanian linguists who have studied these Romanian dialects.

## 1. THE BAYASH

The Bayash (or Rudari) are small ethnic groups which speak different rather archaic dialects of Romanian[2] and live dispersed throughout Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and, in smaller numbers, in Macedonia, Greece, Ukraine, Slovakia and Slovenia. They do not know Romani and the vast majority are bilingual, also speaking the language of the country they live in. The Bayash, because of their semi-nomadic way of life, mentality and certain physical characteristics, are perceived as Gypsies by others and sometimes they themselves identify as Gypsies or Roma. Chelcea, trying to solve the "enigma" of this group, advances the hypothesis that they are an ancient population

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[2] The dialects spoken by the Bayash are quite heterogeneous, as they came in relatively small groups from different dialectal areas on the territory of Romania, are spread on a vast territory in isolated communities, have moved permanently in search of wood and been in contact with populations speaking different languages. Their vernaculars do not completely overlap with the Romanian dialects, due to their (semi-)nomadism, mobility and isolation on the very territory of Romania and, consequently, to "gathering" and preserving of linguistic elements belonging to more Romanian dialects. Most of the archaisms in their language appear at a lexical level (for more details see Sorescu-Marinković 2008). One can also detect archaic features at a phonetic or morphological level (more on this in the present study), though extensive research is needed in order to demarcate innovations from archaisms.

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of unknown origin, "as far away from Romanians as they are from the Roma" (1944: 44). Other researchers, on the other hand, maybe more realistically and with less emotion, believe that, during the Roma slavery in Romania, house slaves were forbidden to speak Romani, and their descendants, the Bayash, today have a variety of Romanian, rather than Romani, as their mother tongue. It is also worth mentioning that the Bayash can be compared to other populations identified as "Gypsies" in various countries of Central and Southeastern Europe that do not speak Romani but rather one of the local languages (most Romungri in Hungary, the Balkan Egyptians, the Djorgovci in Serbia and Macedonia, the Albanian-speaking Ashkalia, the Serbian Gypsies, etc). Even if the conditions of language shift in the case of these groups were not necessarily direct consequences of slavery, this contextualization might prove useful and productive for the development of this relatively understudied field of Romani studies.

It is widely accepted that the period when the Bayash from the Romanian principalities started migrating to the neighboring regions (back then parts of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, today separate countries) can be confined to the 18th–19th century. However, before emancipation, their flight over the rather fluid borders of the time was not a phenomenon of vast proportions, their mobility reflecting, in a way, the demographic movements of that period, when different politico-military or economic circumstance brought about the displacement of large numbers of people. Mainly after the emancipation (which started roughly around the middle of the 19th century), but also before it, the Roma from Romania moved to neighboring countries, where measures were taken for the expulsion of these illegal immigrants (Achim 1998: 106). Serbian archive documents from as early as the first half of the 19th century record numerous cases of Romanian Gypsies from the principality of Walachia (Southern Romania) who settled in Serbia. These newcomers were called *Romanian Gypsies* or *Karavlachs* (which may either mean 'Black Vlachs' or just 'coming from *Karavlaška*', as Wallachia was called in that period) and some of them spoke only Romanian. Romanian historians believe that the departure of some Roma from Romania represented a spontaneous demographic process of long standing, which encompassed relatively small groups of people who acted independently (Achim 1998: 107). This process was noted by contemporaries, but not too much attention was given to it. The archive documentation is scarce and there is no study on this topic in Romanian historiography.

Until recently, the Bayash of Serbia, as well as other Bayash groups from the Balkans, preserved their traditional occupation, namely woodwork: men used to carve tubs and make wooden spoons, while women used to make spindles and then go from village to village in order to sell or exchange them for food and clothes (for more details about the traditional occupation of the Bayash see Sikimić 2005b: 256–257). This is why they are often called spoon- or spindle-makers (*Lingurari, Fusari*), even though this occupation is pursued by only a few today. Now some of

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them are adjusting to village life and the tillage of the land (Orsós 1997: 198−199); others continue to maintain a peripatetic lifestyle, traveling in order to sell different things, but the wooden objects have been mainly replaced by plastic (as one participant said, "Plastic killed us"); some of them "re-oriented" towards other crafts, such as wickerwork; and many of them are working as migrant workers in the countries of Western Europe (Hedeşan 2005, Sorescu-Marinković 2007a).

The terms used to refer to the groups of Bayash in different countries are: *Banjaši* in Serbia, *Beás* in Hungary, *Bajaši* in Croatia, *Karavlasi* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Rudari* in Bulgaria, *Băieşi* and *Rudari* in Romania. In Serbia, *Banjaši* is a cover-term mainly used in scientific circles (Sikimić 2005a: 7). This ethnonym in Serbia is known only among the group of Bayash settled in the region of Bačka, along the Danube, near the border with Croatia and Hungary. The term is only sporadically understood, but not used among other Bayash groups in the region of the Serbian Banat. In Serbia, south of the Danube, aside from professionyms (*Lingurari, Fusari, Koritari, Rudari*), the following ethnonyms are also used: *Ţigani/Ţâgani* ('Gypsies'), *Cigani Rumuni*/*rumunski Cigani* ('Romanian Gypsies'), *Vlaški Cigani* ('Vlach Gypsies'), or *Karavlasi* (see Sikimić 2006), both by the members of the community and by the majority population. The issue surrounding the complexity of the various ethnonyms and professionyms plagues much of the research on the Bayash population. It is almost impossible to sketch an approximate list of settlements relying on the information and figures offered by official censuses. Some self-designations are often confusing because Bayash groups practice a strong mimicry as a social strategy for acceptance. Nonetheless, the number of Bayash settlements in Serbia, estimated with the help of perceptual dialectology methods and qualitative analysis, is around 180, but this figure can be misleading, because some of them are very small or even separate satellite settlements under a special name (for a preliminary list of Bayash settlements in Serbia see Sikimić 2005a: 10−12). Furthermore, this estimation relies on the subjective attitudes of the Bayash alone towards the language of their community and towards other Bayash communities familiar to them (Sikimić 2006).

As far as the scientific literature about the Bayash is concerned, in spite of the relatively small number of studies, there has been an on-going interest in this ethnic community. These *other* groups of Romanian language speakers, "hidden, marginal and problematic", as Hedeşan (2005: 17) puts it, have intrigued Romanian linguists and historians from the beginning of the 20th century onward (Ieşan 1906, Filipescu 1906, Petrovici 1938, Chelcea 1944, Calotă 1995, Saramandu 1997; for a detailed analysis of the existing literature in Romanian see Hedeşan 2005: 16−24). Today, with the advance of Romani studies, we are witnessing a general interest in the Bayash in the European countries where they live, both by academics and by members of the community. Hungary is probably the most developed in this respect. Here, attempts at describing the *Ardelean* variant of the Bayash dialects began in the 1980s and seems to gain momentum in our days (Papp *apud* Orsós

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1997: 199). There are also notable collections of Bayash folklore (Kovalcsik 1994a, 1994b, Orsós 1998), meant to form the basis of the education of Bayash children, collections of poetry, stories and music in the Bayash vernaculars, as well as different translations. There exists a special new scientific literature about the Bayash (Kemény 2000, Réger 1995), as well as Bayash-Hungarian and Hungarian-Bayash dictionaries (Papp 1982, Varga 1996, Orsós 2003, 2004), and a system for transcribing the Bayash dialect, based on the orthographic rules of Hungarian. Pupils and students have the possibility of instruction in Bayash in elementary and high schools and in university departments, while earlier this dialect could only be acquired among the natives. In addition, Bayash language courses are organized in different places and students can take language exams in Bayash in accredited centers (Orsós 1997: 199). The year 2005 saw the Bayash language of Croatia published in its own alphabet for the first time in the Catholic Catechism (Miljak 2005) and there is also a radio program broadcast in the Bayash language. In Croatia, preparations for a Bayash dictionary were scheduled to start in 2004. Both in Hungary and in Croatia systems for transcribing Bayash dialects have emerged, based on the orthographic rules of Hungarian and Croatian, respectively.

In Serbia so far there is no institutionalized instruction, language planning or research in the language of the Bayash, which has not gained domain ground within the church, media or administration. The Bayash themselves might not consider it necessary to have access to these kinds of public services in their language since practically all of them actively use Serbian. Written usage of the language does not exist, nor have there been any attempts at creative writing. Apart from a comprehensive volume of anthropological, linguistic and ethnographic studies about the Bayash living in Serbia, which appeared in 2005 (Sikimić 2005), there is nothing else to suggest even their existence, which automatically transforms them into a *hidden minority* (for a detailed definition of this term see Sikimić 2004).

## 2. BAYASH VERNACULARS IN SERBIA

The Bayash vernaculars in Serbia at the moment live on solely as an oral language, being used within the family and as a secret language unless the Bayash live in a Romanian speaking environment. The dialects spoken by the Bayash groups can differ greatly from settlement to settlement. After leaving their Romanian linguistic environment, the Bayash were influenced by the new linguistic surroundings and this situation has caused important changes in their language. However, the Bayash dialects cannot be considered as constituting a language separate from Romanian, since they have preserved the crucial features (syntactic and morphological) of the Romanian language, the most important changes occurring in the lexicon, because of the need to borrow new words. As

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Orsós puts it, "calling it a language is either oversimplification or didacticism, for it must not be forgotten that it is an archaic but living variant of Romanian" (Orsós 1997: 199). Nevertheless, this perspective might change in respect to the definition of language and languageness, for it must not be forgotten that language is not (entirely) a linguistic phenomenon, but a social one. However, from the point of view of Romanian dialectology, which we will adopt in the present study, the Bayash vernaculars represent a bundle of varieties of Romanian particularized by the special dialectal features they "collected" from the different zones of Romania in which the Bayash have traveled or lived and by borrowings from Serbian, which are often (though not always) accommodated to its phonology and phonotactics.

Some linguists have tried to sketch the itinerary of Bayash groups from Romania to their present habitat. Saramandu, for example, on the basis of his fieldwork among the Bayash communities of Northern Croatia, states that they originate in Southeastern Crişana, Northeastern Banat and Southwestern Transylvania and arrived in their present habitat by crossing Banat, Serbia (Vojvodina), Eastern Bosnia and Eastern Croatia (Saramandu 1997: 109−110). Petrovici points to the Muntean origin of the Bayash from Western Serbia (Petrovici 1938: 228), while Hedeşan, speaking of the Bayash from Trešnjevica, Central Serbia, presumes they also originate in Muntenia, but arrived in Serbia after a sojourn in Banat (Hedeşan 2005: 42−50). We can only conclude, on the basis of the linguistic studies of Bayash vernaculars and our own field research (which showed that there is great variation in the varieties spoken by the Bayash groups in Serbia), that the Bayash began migrating towards Serbia approximately after the abolition of slavery in Romania, in the mid-19$^{th}$ century, but probably also prior to the abolition, from different regions and dialectal areas of Romania, in migration waves of different intensities and amplitudes, probably unorganized and in small groups, following different routes and settling mainly along river basins, in search of the necessary wood for their traditional occupation, in a semi-migrational manner which can be defined as *wood transhumance* (Chelcea 1944: 54).

In Serbia, the Bayash vernaculars can be roughly described in terms of shared isoglosses and thus divided into two main groups: the *Ardelean*[3] and the *Muntean*. The *Ardelean* dialect is spoken by the Bayash in Serbia north of the Danube and the *Muntean* dialect south of the Danube and Sava. However, this division is a very general and approximate one and does not correspond exactly to the more diverse reality in the field. While for the Bayash groups south of the Danube it can be asserted that the basis of their vernacular is the *Muntean* dialect of the Romanian language and that they have sojourned for some period in the Romanian Banat, where they have borrowed some lexical and phonetic features of the local varieties (Hedeşan 2005: 37–50), on the basis of linguistic data, it can be said that the groups

[3] Romanian dialectology does not recognize the existence of an *Ardelean* dialect. In the present study, this is only a cover-term used for the cluster of idioms with dialectal features belonging to more regions of Ardeal (Transylvania).

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north of the Danube have had a different itinerary. The Bayash north of the Danube are internally divided into *"Munteni"* and *Ardeleni*, but this division is not a strictly dialectal one. The *"Munteni"* north of the Danube also speak a variety which has as its basis the *Muntean* dialect, but there are some phonetic changes in their speech which suggest that they followed a different route from the Romanian principalities to their present habitat. Here, the number of *Bănățean* and *Ardelean* lexical and also phonetic features is much higher than in the dialects south of the Danube. So the *Munteni* south and *"Munteni"* north of the Danube do not speak the same variety: they are two separate groups who have followed distinct routes. The *Ardelean* dialect spoken north of the Danube contains a large number of lexical, phonetic and grammatical features characteristic for the dialects spoken in the Ardeal and Banat regions, but the differences between the two vernaculars spoken in Serbia north of the Danube are quite insignificant from a dialectological point of view (however, they may be perceived as important by the members of the community).

In the region of Serbian Banat, things are even more complicated. There some of the Bayash also live in Romanian villages or in mixed Serb-Romanian ones, consequently in a totally or partially Romanian linguistic environment. Thus, to the fact that Bayash vernaculars differ from place to place we must add the fact that the (non-Bayash) Romanians from the Serbian Banat speak three different dialects of the Romanian language: *Ardelean, Bănățean* and *Oltean* (according to Flora 1969). Inevitably, the vernaculars of the Bayash are influenced by the local Romanian dialect[4] and the Romanian standard linguistic norm, for they attend school in Romanian (if the village has one). But, as in the case of other small, dispersed, relatively mobile and non-compact communities, it is impossible to draw general conclusions regarding the language of the Bayash: if in some villages their variety almost merged into the more prestigious Romanian local dialect, in others it still preserves individualizing features. Flora, in his monograph on the Romanian dialects spoken in Serbian Banat, draws attention to the differences between the dialect of "Romanian Gypsies" and of the Romanians living together in the village of Malo Središte (close to Vršac, near the border with Romania), noticing that the former one is a dialect with *Oltean* and *Ardelean* features, while the latter is a *Bănățean* dialect. In order to illustrate the difference, Flora mentions the following phonetic features: *ginće* 'tooth' (Bayash) – *đinće* (Romanians), *žuok* 'play, dance' – *źuok*, *žuńe* 'young man, bridegroom' – *źuńe*, *mişkă* 'move (3rd person, present, sg. and pl.)' – *miśkă*, *dîntîi* 'first' – *dîntîń*, *pă* 'on (prep.)' – *pră*, *pîn* 'through (prep.)' – *prîn* (Flora 1969: 406–407). The most recent ethnolinguistic field researches conducted in another Romanian village, Grebenac, led to the same conclusions, this

[4] Furthermore, there are villages whose inhabitants came from different regions of Romania and, as such, two Romanian dialects are spoken there (for example in Begejci or Banatsko Novo Selo), but today the distinction between the Romanian dialects spoken in the Serbian Banat tends to fade away, due to the strong influence of the much more wide-spread *Bănățean* dialect.

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time based on differences at a morphological level, namely the auxiliary *have*, which in the third person plural, with the local Romanians, has the form *or* (e.g. *or vińit* '(they) came'*, or fost* '(they) were'), typical of the *Bănățean* dialect, while with the Bayash it is realized as *ar* (e.g. *ar vińit, ar fost*), a possible Muntean feature (Sikimić 2007).

Things are almost the same in Northeastern Serbia, where the Bayash live together with the Vlachs, another Romanian speaking population which makes use of two Romanian dialects, according to the geographical region they live in. They are slightly different from the ones in the Serbian Banat, because the Vlachs lost contact with the Romanian speaking population from Romania at a different time from the Romanians in Banat and, furthermore, they preserve an archaic language because they do not have access to schooling in their mother tongue. A detailed linguistic analysis might also show that, in spite of the fact that the Bayash are influenced by the local variety of Romanian, they maintain the characteristics of their own Romanian variety. Our recent field data[5] point to a slight dialectological distinction between the vernaculars of the Bayash and those of the Vlachs, also emphasized by the linguistic perception of the speakers themselves. At a lexical level we can single out the very term for the wooden objects they produce, *cupăi* 'wooden troughs', a *Muntean* dialectal lexeme, as opposed to the *Bănățean* one *postăvi*, used by the Vlachs in the village. At a phonetic level, the distinction is quite sharp: only the Bayash make use of a so-called "sibilant speech",[6] meaning that the palato-alveolar sibilants [ʒ] and [ʃ] are consistently replaced with the dental sibilants *z* and *s*, as in the following examples: *Azun* 'Christmas Eve' instead of *Aʒun*, *zos* 'down' instead of *ʒos*, *nostri* 'ours' instead of *noʃtri*, *a iesît* 's/he got out' instead of *a ieʃît*.

In some Bayash communities strong endogamy prevails (Berilje, for example, near the town of Prokuplje, the most Southern compact Bayash settlement in Serbia known so far, according to our field researches), so the language of their members has been greatly protected from any external influence and preserved in its original form. However, the most common situation is *group endogamy* (Sikimić 2006): the members of the Bayash community are aware of the existence of distant Bayash settlements and, in spite of the physical distance, they have various connections with them, thus forming a *mental network*, or *mental continuity*, as Sikimić puts it: "This mental continuity, with the appearance of new

[5] The recordings were made in Urovica (north of Negotin, near the border with Romania), an ethnically mixed Vlach-Bayash-Roma village, with recent Romanian migrants.

[6] Around the middle of the last century this very localized manner of speech (only a few villages in Banat and Oltenia), perceived as "childish" or "corrupt", which was obviously doomed to disappear in the near future, attracted the attention of Romanian linguists, who advanced various hypotheses in the attempt to shed light on its origin (Borcilă 1965). Hedeşan is the first one to have noticed the same phenomenon with the Bayash in Serbia, where the lack of language control makes its preservation more probable (Hedeşan 2005: 37−41).

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borders in the Balkans and massive transplantations of whole Bayash settlements into the countries of Western Europe, is seen as transborder movement. Nowadays marriages between members of settlements hundreds of kilometers away from each other are very common, and some of them are in different countries after the breakdown of Yugoslavia, or even in Romania". This has a great impact on the vernaculars spoken by the Bayash, leading to mixing of varieties and languages. We can go as far as to say that each village has its own variety, which differs only slightly from the ones surrounding it but is perceived as different by the members of the local community. In some communities, mixing of varieties is so pronounced that reliable linguistic conclusions can only be drawn by analyzing the idiolects of the informants (Sikimić 2005c: 158).

Apart from the special marriage practices discussed above, a most important factor in language preservation and change is the language of the community in which the Bayash live. It must be noted that, apart from some notable exceptions (Brodica and Plažane in Northeastern Serbia and Strižilo in Central Serbia), the Bayash live in ethnically mixed settlements, so frequent code-switching and code-mixing phenomena can be observed, as well as lexical borrowings from the Serbian language (which are mostly integrated: equipped with typical Romanian suffixes or prefixes or inflected according to Romanian grammatical rules). Even if the great majority of Bayash from Serbia are bilingual, among those living in a purely Serbian speaking environment, a tendency to lose proficiency in the mother tongue can be observed. The Bayash vernaculars, in most of their settlements in Serbia, are only used for family and inter-group communication. Modernization, especially formal education and lack of mother tongue schooling, will cause the Bayash to shift over time to the Serbian language.

In spite of the fact that the Bayash vernaculars are not a separate language, the creation of a special system for transcribing them, as well as deviation from the international or Romanian spelling, can be justified for two reasons. The first is because the Bayash are literate (if at all) only in the language of the country they live in, so they can learn the particular phonetic spelling easily. The second is because in countries like Hungary or Croatia, which have developed a specific system for transcribing the Bayash varieties, the Bayash have a Bayash or Roma identity. Saramandu, using the data obtained during his dialectological research carried out in 1996 in Medjimurje, the Northern region of Croatia, asserts that, even if the Croatians call them Gypsies, the Bayash consider themselves Romanian because the Romanian language is their mother tongue and because they do not know Romani (Saramandu 1997: 99)[7]. Meanwhile, our anthropological and

[7] However, we think that Saramandu's findings may be plagued by the fact that in Pribislavec he only had one informant from whom he obtained all the 17 texts presented at the end of his paper. Based on these texts, we suspect that his informant, aged 34 at the time of the field research, is probably one of the local "pro-Romanian" activists (as opposed to the "pro-Roma" or "pro-Bayash" ones, the Bayash community being a fragmented one at an organizational level) who had recent contacts with Romania, his use of Romanian neologisms being impossible to be accounted for otherwise.

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linguistic field research carried out in January 2006 in the Bayash settlement of Kuršanec in Medjimurje, Croatia[8], amongst the schoolchildren and younger population[9], showed no awareness of the local vernacular as a clearly Romanian language, nor any clear idea of Romania as their country of origin. This attitude on the part of the younger generation can be explained by the fact that modern Croatia has no border with Romania and no ethnic Romanian minority (except for very few and very specific ethnic groups of Istroromanians), thus, in time, the consciousness of their Romanian identity faded and gradually vanished.[10] We must also mention here the powerful impact of Romani NGOs, which support and encourage the Bayash to declare themselves as Roma. The lack of information and linguistic knowledge also led to ungrounded and bizarre statements, such as those made by some Croatian pedagogues that the Bayash variety from Croatia (*ljimba d' bjaš*) is a Romani dialect (Hrvatić 2005: 186).

Unlike the Bayash from distant regions of Croatia, all the Bayash from Serbia are aware of the fact that their vernacular is closely connected to the Romanian language and that they must have originated in Romania. Many Bayash communities preserve the legend of their arriving from the Romanian lands, "over the Danube water" or "from the Carpathians" (Sorescu-Marinković 2005). Nevertheless, they tend to have a double, even triple identity, depending on the context: in official censuses they declare themselves mostly as Serbians (Sikimić 2005a, 2005b, 2005c); while talking to the researcher in the Romanian language they say they are Romanians (Sorescu-Marinković 2005); while talking to other members of the family or of the Bayash community they use the appellatives *Ţâgan* and *Ţâgancă*, which implicitly points to their self-identification. Some of the Bayash from Serbia have recently traveled to Romania and this country is not an abstract notion to them. In the Serbian Banat there is a relatively large Romanian minority and in Northeastern Serbia there is another minority speaking the Romanian language – the Vlachs. While the Romanians from Banat have access to schooling, mass media and religious services in Romanian, the Vlachs only use Romanian as an internal means of communication within the family or community (see Sorescu 2004), which is almost the same as with the Bayash. The difference between Vlachs and Bayash is that the first group is much more compact, geographically, linguistically and ideologically. The Bayash are scattered all over Serbia and the Balkans and their group identification greatly differs from place to place, as do their vernaculars. It might also be that the non-existence of an umbrella-ethnonym to be used as a self-denomination by all Bayash in Serbia hinders their group consciousness even more.

[8] With the help of the Croatian ethnologist Toni Marušić, to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude.

[9] It must be also mentioned that the oldest person in the settlement, at the moment of the research, was only 54 years old.

[10] All the Bayash in Baranja (Eastern Croatia, near the border with Serbia and Hungary), on the other hand, know that their language is Romanian.

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After World War II, some attempts were made to introduce the Romanian language into the schools attended by Bayash north of the Danube, in Apatin (Barjaktarević 1964: 202) and Monoštor (Čičovački 1997: 271), with teachers from Banat, but the schools only functioned for a few years and after that they were closed. During the last few years there have been several attempts on behalf of local non-governmental organizations in the Eastern Bačka region to introduce optional classes in Romanian. At the moment only two such projects are still ongoing: optional classes in Romanian in the village of Vajska, and a kindergarten in the local *Ardelean* dialect in Bački Monoštor, attended by 20 Bayash pupils altogether.

## 3. A BAYASH DICTIONARY IN SERBIA

Many linguists and lexicographers believe that, potentially, dictionaries of endangered languages are a key tool in language maintenance and revival work, that dictionaries can play a role in classroom and non-classroom language acquisition (Corris *et al*. 2004: 53). Dictionaries are an early strategy in the standardization of languages that have lived mainly in oral form and they provide a good basis for further research and can also be used as an educational tool. With respect to Romani, Friedman (1999) notices that orthography has always been an issue for its standardization: "Because efforts of Romani education have taken place in the context of the languages of other countries, as many orthographies have been used for Romani as there are standard languages with which it has been in contact" (p. 331). This also holds for the Bayash, even if at a reduced scale. The Bayash varieties in Serbia do not have a written form so far, or a system of transcription, and they are not used in writing by the members of the community. Neither has research on Bayash varieties been institutionalized.

Thus, the elaboration of a Bayash dictionary in Serbia would raise a series of problems. First of all, there is the continuum of variation that exists between the different vernaculars, which makes it difficult to isolate a particular autonomous norm. The Bayash in Serbia speak two main dialects, but there are many other local subdialects and mixed idiolects. In general, codification requires making choices and prioritizing some variants over others. The difficulty of the choice becomes pronounced in minority languages that often permit more variation than majority languages (Granquist 2006: 56).

One of the most prominent examples of variation, noticed also by the members of the community and perceived as a distinctive feature of each of the dialects, is the lexical variation, mainly in nouns: *pipárkă – ardéi* 'pepper', *pítă – pîine – ázîmă* 'bread', *imálă – nămól – norói* 'mud', *usturói – ái* 'garlic', *avlíie – obór – bătătúră* 'courtyard'. There is also the problem of phonological differences which characterize different dialects, for example: *oḱ – oįḱ* 'eye', *vurbéʃće –*

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*vorbéʃće* ‘s/he speaks’, *pă – pră – pe* ‘on, to’, *nóstri – nóʃtri* ‘ours’. Even if this variation does not impair understanding between distant settlements, the problem of their representation in the dictionary still remains: Which one should be the main entry, in case we opt for a multiple entry? Should we have separate entries for each of the variants? As far as the verbs are concerned, the Bayash vernaculars, as other Balkan languages, do not have the infinitive form. Thus, verbal entries must follow another principle, not the standard lexicographical one, where the infinitive is the main entry. One possible solution is to use the present tense of the verb, third person singular, followed by the complete inflection of the verb, this being the practice of choice in a number of dictionaries of various languages of the Balkans, the third person singular being the base form that ensures the highest degree of predictability.[11] Nonetheless, the verb *to be* will probably pose the most problems, as its inflectional forms are quite different from dialect to dialect (present tense: *io mi-s / îs / sînt* ‘I am’*, el e / îi / iaşte* ‘he is’, *noi ni-s / işt*em */ sîntem* ‘we are’). Additionally, some dialects posses verbal forms or tenses unknown to others: some *Muntean* dialects use the Simple Perfect, which has disappeared in the other varieties, due to its reduced use in Romania and under the influence of the Serbian language; other dialects (spoken in Vojvodina) are characterized by a high frequency of the suffixal particle *-ră* in the morphology of the verb (especially Perfect and Present), whose use is optional and which has no evident functional or stylistic function, cf. *Care cum vreau-ră.* [Which how want-*ră*.] *Ce vreau duce-ră.* [What want take-*ră*.] *Care cum vrea*. [Which how wants.] (Sikimić 2005c: 158−159). The use of this particle is extremely localized on the territory of Romania and has no correspondent among the other Bayash varieties in Serbia, being preserved only in those localities which are not under the influence of the more prestigious vernaculars of the Romanians or of the mass media in Romanian, which would “correct” this deviation. All these phenomena require a minimal normative grammar to be included in the dictionary and probably dictionary-use skills to be taught to the members of the community.

Another problem related to the representation of variation in the dictionary, especially when this is due to rapid language change, is that linguists and lexicographers have tended to give priority to older people’s speech. However, the younger people are more likely to be literate and to use the dictionary. If the dictionary reflects the pronunciation and usages of an earlier generation, this makes it harder for younger people to use and perhaps makes them feel inadequate, in that they are not speaking in the way that older people speak (Corris *et al*. 2004: 55). For example, the younger Bayash generation in Apatin (Northwestern Serbia, the town with the biggest Bayash community), when speaking the native variety, no longer uses the lexeme *scam* (‘chair’, Romanian *scaun*), very frequent among the older generation, but the Serbian *stolica*. This code-mixing and consequent loss of Romanian words is a massive phenomenon with the Bayash all over Serbia.

[11] This solution was also employed by Orsós (2003), in her Bayash-Hungarian dictionary.

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A logical solution would be the elaboration of a dictionary for each of the two dialectal areas, if we are speaking of a Bayash-Serbian dictionary. But if we take into consideration the elaboration of a Serbian-Bayash dictionary, for the same entry we can offer multiple variants, various competing dialectal forms, mentioning the dialect to which they belong. True, a dictionary will employ orthographic conventions which are sometimes at odds with what the local people are used to, but this is necessary for the sake of consistency and accuracy (Lichtenberk 2003: 392). The resources of a written language are always more limited than those of oral usage, which reduces linguistic diversity, because one dialect is given a dominant position (Granquist 2006: 55). Furthermore, it must be also taken into consideration that developing a written standard for languages that have only existed in oral form does not indisputably further the maintenance of the language, because it may cause weakening of the oral tradition.

We can also take into account the elaboration of a Bayash-Romanian or Romanian-Bayash dictionary. This would be of an immense interest to the Romanian scholarly community, especially to linguists and dialectologists. Such a dictionary would represent a lexical corpus which gives insight into what the Romanian dialects would have looked like if they had developed independently of the standard language and would be a special dialectological dictionary of the Romanian language. Until now, we have elaborated small dialectal glossaries for the dialects of Vlachs and Romanians of Vojvodina, with samples of transcribed spontaneous discourse, in order to illustrate the entries in the glossary (Sikimić and Sorescu 2003, Sorescu-Marinković 2007). This type of contribution can form the basis for the later elaboration of a dialectological dictionary.

The system of transcription to be used is another important problem. Here there are three possibilities. First, the internationally accepted phonetic transcription can be used, but it would only make sense to and could be employed exclusively by linguists. Second, the Romanian system of transcription could be employed. The Romanians from Vojvodina also learn the Romanian literary language in school, at the same time preserving their dialectal features, which they use in their everyday interaction. They do not see their dialect as a legitimate language, but rather a deviant form of the standard. They are aware that they do not speak “proper Romanian” at home, but they can read and understand the literary language. Instead of “ghettoizing” the vernacular of the Bayash, instead of transforming it into a separate language, awareness of the similarities and differences which exist between the dialects of the Romanian language could be raised and people helped to understand that they speak a dialect of the Romanian language, as it is the case with the Romanians of Vojvodina. The goal would be helping the members of the community to acquire the standard language while maintaining their own way of speaking and thus their linguistic self-respect (cf. Siegel 1999: 515). In this sense, logistics would not be a problem: in Vojvodina there are already schools, handbooks and publications in the Romanian language. If the Bayash live together with Romanians, they attend school in the Romanian

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language, so they are also familiar with the literary variant of Romanian. Even if the Bayash in Vojvodina are under the same modernizing pressures as any other group, the frequent interaction with the Romanians living in this region helped them maintain their dialect, which is seen as a legitimate language, by comparison to the quite similar dialects spoken by the Romanians. Using the Romanian system of transcription, technically speaking, could be easily extended south of the Danube. However, the members of the Bayash community might not agree with attending school in standard Romanian (in Hungary, on whose territory Bayash and Romanians also coexist, the Bayash have a totally separate educational system) and might want to have access to education in their own vernacular. Third, then, a system can be created for transcribing the Bayash vernaculars, based on the orthographic rules of the Serbian language, because the Bayash who read Serbian can learn this phonetic spelling easily. An easy-to-read, transdialectal orthography, that is not too difficult and distant for its users, might prove to be, in the future, an acceptable solution that would serve as the basis of both literary communication and a literary language for use in schools[12].

Another important question to be answered is what such a dictionary should comprise. Given the major socio-cultural changes and the accompanying loss of parts of traditional culture, there is an undeniable danger of loss of many lexical items associated with Bayash traditional culture. In other cultures with unwritten languages, older people want their dictionaries to record such words for posterity. However, they

> do not necessarily believe that recording them will reverse the process of social and cultural change, and in fact they would not even welcome such a reversal. Their interest is in recording and preserving the words for the benefit of those who are too young to have lived in the times when they were still in common use and for future generations (Lichtenberk 2003: 390).

So far, lists of desiderata have been conceived for transforming exclusively oral languages into written ones, which include, among others, the collection of localized texts, making dictionaries of localisms and reflections about language contact (see, for example, Kahl 2005: 159−164, on Aromanian).

Last but not least, the audience and purposes of such a dictionary must be established. In the first place, we must decide to whom such a dictionary is to be addressed: to the scientific community or to the members of the local community. In an ideal world, as Crowley suggests, we should aim to produce two different dictionaries for every language – a linguist-friendly volume and a separate community-friendly one:

[12] As is often the case, reality exceeded our expectations. In the beginning of 2006, the Bayash from Apatin expressed their wish to run a radio program and asked for our help in drafting the news. The texts were to be written in "Bayash", not in Romanian, with an easy-to-read orthography, based on the Serbian system of transcription. The project has not taken off so far.

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> With modern computer technology, the same database could probably be adapted to these different formats without too much additional work, though the community-friendly dictionaries would still need both a generous benefactor to finance their production, as well as academics who were willing to devote some of their precious research time to this task, with no academic reward (Crowley 1999: 10).

The academic discussions surrounding dictionary usability usually mention two different kinds of users: on the one hand, users with emerging literacy and little familiarity with dictionaries (most researchers argue for taking into account the sorts of problems people will have with various dictionary conventions such as alphabetical ordering and abbreviations), and on the other, users with standard literacy and familiarity with dictionaries (Corris *et al*. 2004: 35).

But this raises the question of the actual use of the dictionary by the members of the community. It is well established that dictionaries, apart from their practical uses, and regardless of whether people use them at all, also serve a symbolic function. As Crowley (1999: 9) has noted with regard to his dictionary of Paamese: "whatever copies were originally distributed have ended up locked away from prying eyes… it seems that it is something highly valued, and at the same time irreplaceable". Even supposing that speakers do think that dictionaries are useful language tools, the problem with these potential users is that currently, the majority of people in the communities do not have good access to dictionaries, do not use them and do not necessarily have all the literacy and reference skills required to use the dictionary. It is highly probable that the same thing will happen in Serbia because in the Bayash communities the older people are mostly illiterate and those who are merely literate have a great respect towards books and the act of writing in general, which will probably cause them to also lock away the dictionary and cherish it without actually using it. However, this lack of consciousness is by no means restricted to small language speakers; on the contrary, most dictionary use surveys seem to be in agreement that dictionaries, even of languages like English, are generally under-exploited (Corris *et al*. 2004: 53).

One of the main reasons for the making of a dictionary is language prestige. The existence of a dictionary is emblematic of recognition of the language as a "true" language. In the case of small languages, such emblematic value is inevitably localized, restricted to the specific language areas (Lichtenberk 2003: 391). There is no expectation that the existence of a Bayash dictionary will lead to the spread of the language beyond its current area or that it will become a lingua franca. It is also unrealistic to think that the dictionary will be frequently used by the local people. More likely than not, besides being a lexical record of the language, its chief value for the local people will be just its existence, "a sign of recognition by the outside world of the worth of their language" (Lichtenberk 2003: 400).

As previously mentioned, linguists have long seen dictionaries as an essential contribution to saving endangered languages, to preserving them for future study or revival (Warner and Butler 2006 discuss the creation of a dictionary for use in a

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Native American community that is attempting to revitalize its dormant ancestral language entirely from archival materials). The main audience for dictionaries of these languages has been linguists and other people from literate traditions. To this end most of the literature on the subject deals with the problems of trying to represent the traditional language as exhaustively as possible and, in cases of rapidly disappearing languages, with capturing them in print as quickly as possible, or with discussing orthographical and semantic issues (Corris *et al*. 2004: 34).

However, many native speakers are not used to the idea of a written work as a port of call for learning. The example Corris *et al*. (2004) offer with regard to Alawa women who, after being introduced to the Alawa dictionary and encouraged to find all the Alawa words for different kinds of kangaroo, said that they would go home (350 kilometers away) and ask the old people for the Alawa words, even if the dictionary was on the table in front of them, is more than telling in this sense.

In spite of all these and except for practical aid in terms of writing dictionaries and grammars and contributing to education programs, there is, at a more general level, the matter of ideology. The fate of many minority languages is likely to be determined to a large extent by ideology – both the ideology of people associated with minority language and of those associated with mainstream ones (Myhill 1999: 34). Writing down the Bayash varieties through the use of the Cyrillic or the Latin alphabet might also be a debated issue, as happened with the vernaculars of the Vlachs from Northeastern Serbia[13]. This problem deserves a research piece of its own in order to do justice to its complexity. It is important though to note that we are dealing with a complex ideological issue. On the one hand, wanting a minority dialect to achieve a prestigious status by being written down constitutes an attempt to raise self-awareness of the larger group which speaks it. On the other hand, the inability to imagine it as being simultaneously both, unwritten and respected, is an outcome of the symbolic dominance of the official code.

## 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The great degree of fragmentation within the Bayash community and the lack of a transnational Bayash movement make the standardization of their vernaculars and the elaboration of a Bayash dictionary an improbable enterprise. As in the case

[13] On the official forum of the Vlachs from Serbia, www.muzej-mpek.org.yu/ forum.vlasi.srbije, which was released at the beginning of 2007, one can get accustomed to the diverse variants of writing the Vlach vernaculars (Cyrillic or Latin orthography, standard or dialectal Romanian, Serbian or Romanian based transcription); the "official" version the forum administrator imposed has a Latin orthography and is a hybrid of Romanian and Serbian transcription. However, we must ask ourselves to what extent this alphabet will be used during future discussions on the forum, since the majority of Vlachs are not familiar with the Romanian transcription and the diacritics will render communication more difficult.

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of many other linguistic groups, the modernizing pressure the Bayash are faced with might end in their shifting in the near future to the state language, Serbian. Maybe the only chance of survival the Bayash varieties have is raising awareness of the fact that they are dialects of the Romanian language, which, at the moment, tends to gain prestige, Romania joining the European Union in 1 January 2007 being responsible for this change of attitude. We can only wait and see what impact this political change will have on the Bayash community. However, we should keep in mind that the Romanian society is probably not willing and has no interest in (re-)assimilating a marginal and, as many put it, "problematic" group.

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