Romanoslavica vol. XLVI, nr. 4

WHEN COULD BE DATED 'THE EARLIEST SLAVIC BORROWINGS IN ROMANIAN'?

Sorin PALIGA

The paper briefly analyses some crucial elements leading to understanding the Slavic ethnogenesis in the interval from 6th to 10th centuries A.D. These data allow us to note that there is no argument supporting the hypothesis that there were 'Old Slavic elements in Romanian' (i.e. 6th to 7th centuries A.D.) The author compares two studies, one written by Gh. Mihăilă (1971) and a newer one of Ivan Duridanov (1991), which are practically irreconcilable: the former (Mihăilă) brings forth arguments supporting the hypothesis that oldest Slavic borrowings in Romanian cannot be dated earlier than 12th century A.D., whereas the latter (Duridanov) continues to support the older hypothesis that oldest Slavic borrowings may be dated in the 6th century A.D. The data and arguments recently presented in Paliga and Teodor 2009 permit to have a clearer view of the realities in the first millennium A.D. and to try explanations based on solid arguments, not on circumstantial speculations.

Instead of conclusions, the author analyses the relevant case of form *cumătră*.

Key words (English) Slavs, Proto-Slavs, Sclaveni, ethnogenesis, Albanians, East Romance, Proto-Romanians

Introduction

In 1966 Giuliano Bonfante published a then famous study suggestively entitled *Influences du protoroumain sur le protoslave?* in which he brought forth arguments that, among others, the open syllables of the early Slavic phonetic system reflected a Proto-omanian influence. The study was later included in his consistent volume dedicated to various issues regarding the Romanian language, mainly aspects regarding etymology and historical issues (the *Studi romeni*), now also translated into Romanian (Bonfante 2001 – I have used this edition for references in this paper). Several years later, in his turn, Gh. Mihăilă published another reference study dedicated to the criteria of determining the Slavic influences in Romanian (Mihăilă 1971). Several decades have since elapsed, but the problem of the earliest Slavic borrowings in Romanian continues to be frequently debated, with not rare cases when influential linguists still hold the hypothesis that the earliest Slavic borrowings in Romanian may be dated as early as the 6th-th centuries A.D.

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

The problem labelled 'the earliest Slavic borrowings in Romanian' has been constantly present in many volumes or papers. Without analysing the details – as simply quoting the various works where it has been debated would require tens of pages – one may conclude that the overwhelming majority of the Romanian linguists and an important number of the foreign linguists (the situation is complex here, as there are many views of the topic) have advocated the basic idea that 'Slavic had an early and deep influence upon Romanian', with some hues and stresses on various details. (See with details and further discussions Paliga 1997, later reprinted with some additions and corrections as Paliga 2006). The studies written by Bonfante and Mihăilă are rather exceptions, just like our studies. I would refer here to the brief, but dense, paper of Ivan Duridanov (Duridanov 1991, *Die ältesten slawischen Entlehnungen im Rumänischen – The Earliest Slavic Borrowings in Romanian*). The title is eloquent. Duridanov's approach seems rather surprising, as he had published extensive and solid studies in the field of Thracian studies and other fields of comparative grammar (e.g. Duridanov 1989, 1993, 1995 etc.) On the other hand, Duridanov's study is a good proof of the largely spread hypothesis that 'Romanian has a massive Slavic influence' or, if not so important, at least must have had a very early Slavic influence. This conviction began to gradually gain roots in the 19th century, and gradually became so solidly rooted in the conscience of many researchers of the field, that it has got the contours of an obsessive cliché, a doubtless axiom. It is not of course our purpose to deny the Slavic influence in Romanian, as it is obvious. I just want to stress some less known or unknown facts, and to conclude that there was no such 'early Slavic borrowings' datable in the 6th- 7th centuries A.D.

As far as we can approach the topic in a few pages only, our wish is to show that the issue of the 'earliest Slavic borrowings in Romanian' is more complex and, as any complex issue, more complicated than it seemed (and still seems). The two mentioned papers of Bonfante and Mihăilă are almost forgotten now, even if Bonfante's study was lately included in his volume of studies dedicated to the Romanian language. Our studies have not had a happier fate. *Habent sua fata libelli.*

Let us not discourage though. An ample interdisciplinary approach was lately attempted in *Lingvistica și arheologia slavilor timpurii. O altă privire de la Dunărea de Jos* (Linguistics and Archaeology of the Early Slavs – Paliga și Teodor 2009), for the time being the only such attempt in Romania and, to put in straight, among the few similar attempts in the world. Our book is published several years after another book written by a Romanian archaeologist, Florin Curta, shocked – we may say – the scientific world (Curta 2006, the Romanian edition; the English original had been published in 2001). We should not be amazed: there was a long series of errors in preconceived ideas in the study of the early Slavs.

I would just add that quoted large work, and the present paper, reflect a long-lasting preoccupation regarding the substratum heritage in southeast Europe and, as a part of it, the relations between East Romance and Slavic, with several glimpses of attempts to

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

reconstruct the Slavic ethnogenesis. One of the first attempts was published in *Slavistična Revija* (Paliga 1988) and alternatively continued with studies published in the *Linguistica* (Ljubljana) and some other journals, in Romania and abroad. The road has been difficult and turtuous but, after more than 25 years in the meanders of etymology and other historical investigations, I may have the right to try a summary. The reader may find it here.

What is an 'old Slavic element' in Romanian?

Across years, in studies and papers published in various journals, we gradually got to the conclusion that the problem of the Slavic elements in Romanian is far more complicated than previously presented, some due to prestigious, influential linguists. Unfortunately, their assertions, too often taken for granted, for irrefutable axioms, do not resist a keen analysis. As as example, it is not at all proved by analysis that the 'oldest Slavic elements in Romanian date back to the 6th-7th century A.D.; nor is it proved that 'Romanian underwent a massive Slavic influence'; and it is not feasible to accept the view that there are Albanian elements in Romanian. These are clichés spread not only after WW2, but some of them long before, often in a certain political context and with certain political aims. But we know that politics is a frequent intruder into science and, almost always, a bad, if not a catastrophic advisor.

We would like to resume the former discussions about the fate of the so-called 'earliest Slavic borrowings into Romanian' starting from Ivan Duridanov's evoked paper (Duridanov 1991). After summing up various previous studies on the oldest Slavic borrowings into Romanian, the author presents the following list: *baltă* 'a pond; a lake', *daltă* 'chisel', *gard* 'a fence', *jupîn* (*jupân*) 'a local leader, a noble', *măgură* 'a narrow pass in the mountains', *mătură* 'a broom', *smântână* 'milk cream', *stăpân* 'a leader, a master' (see *jupân / jupîn* above), *stână* 'a sheep shelter', *sută* 'one hundred', *șchiau*, pl. *șchei*, today obsolete in vocabulary and / or common speech, „a Slav"; still present in place-names, the best known being *Șcheii Brașovului* (lit. 'the Slavs of Brașov'), but there are other place-names *Șchei* in other districts of Romania. The form was, beyond any doubt, more spread in the past. Let us then attempt a brief analysis.

We anticipate the conclusion below: NONE is, in fact, a Slavic element still less an old Slavic element into Romanian, therefore to be dated in the 6th-7th century A.D. We shall proceed step by step, then by eliminating the possible candidates for the list of the 'oldest Slavic borrowings in Romanian'.

It would be at least a bold attempt to assume that *Sclavus* may be possibly labelled a 'Slavic element' in (Proto-)Romanian. We do know that this form was used at colloquial level as proved by Romanian forms *șchiau*, pl. *șchei* < Late Latin *Sclavus*, for sure borrowed from a local vernacular; in documents, the earliest attested form is *Sclavenus*, pl. *Sclaveni*, Greek *Sklavenoi* but we may infer that the short, colloquial form preceded the bookish form by at least several years, therefore it must have been adapted to

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

postclassical Latin some time before 550 A.D. We must also assume that postclassical *Sclavus*, pl. *Sclavi* (to later become Romanian *șchiau, șchei*) somewhat reflected a borrowing and adaptation from an initial form heard as *slověninъ*, pl. *slověne*. The phonetical evolution is not clear in all details (*c*/ *k* is epenthetic in the sequence *scl-*, *skl-*), but this is acceptable for those hard times of wars and unrest. We may therefore assume that some time before 550 and, from that moment on, the East Romance speakers first heard the Slavic speakers and adapted the original ethnic name *slověninъ*, pl. *slověne* as *Sclavus, Sclavi* (colloquial forms) and, perhaps some time later, *Sclaveni, sklavenoi* (even if these latter forms are, in fact, the earliest attested).

On the other hand, it is highly probable that the new name for the new comers covered, in fact, a multi-ethnic reality, in which the majority was formed by what we may label 'early Slavs' (but it is so, so difficult to define these 'Early Slavs', see below). The modern ethnic names *Slovák* 'a Slovak', *slovenský*, the adjective, and *Slovenec* 'a Slovene', *slovenski* (the adjective) show that an ethnic name derived from the root *slovo* 'word; to utter words in our language (i.e. 'the language we can understand' as opposed to *němci* < *něm-* 'dumb', i.e. 'those who speak a language we cannot understand') must have existed in those times as well, the precursor of the modern ethnic names of the Slovenes and Slovaks. The phonetic evolution from *slověne* to *Sclaveni* or *Sklavenoi* is not clear, but it would be naïve to assume it may traced back with more accuracy. Otherwise put, *Sclaveni* or *Sklavenoi* is close enough to *slověne* so as to assume that the original form was first heard, then adapted to the pronunciation in the Latin vernacular of the age. There is not other plausible explanation, at least we are not capable to offer a better one. But I think the explanation is correct, it is just our task to try to unveil what it may have covered some 1,500 years ago.

We have recently discussed the indeed complex situation of the forms *Sclavenus* şi *Sclavus* (see Paliga and Teodor 2009: 80-83). These cannot be anyway labelled as 'old Slavic elements in Romanian', even if we may be inclined to major concessions and without any local patriotism. Rom. *șchiau, șchei* is indeed an old ethnic name in Romanian, and the best, irrefutable proof it was once used at colloquial level, and continued to be used for several centuries, until the dawn of the modern age, when it became obsolete, then replaced with the modern, bookish form *slav*. It is, in fact, as old as two other ethnic names preserved in Romanian: *rumân* < *Romanus* and *frânc* < *Francus;* to just add that *rumân* turned to have a social, not ethnic, meaning in the Middle Ages: a serf, which obviously reflected the humiliating status of what the heirs of Rome turned to be several centuries later. But that was history. The final re-shaping of *rumân* with the ethnic meaning 'Romanian' consolidated in the 19th century, but it was first documented in 1582. The Middle Ages were not so dark as we were accustomed to consider them, and the memory of that tradition had not died.

In short, *șchiau, șchei* cannot be labelled 'a Slavic element', it is – beyond any reasonable doubt – on the same semantic and historical level together with *rumân* <

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

Romanus and *frânc* < *Francus*. If *rumân* < *Romanus* may be labelled a direct heritage from Latin, then *frânc* < *Francus* and *șchiau, șchei* < *Sclavus* are postclassical Latin elements, i.e. forms borrowed, in less clear circumstances, in the wake of the new historical and political conditions. There were many post-classical forms, borrowed from various sources of the time, but which must be considered Latin elements, be they 'late Latin' or 'post-classical elements'. Therefore, one of the would-be 'early Slavic borrowing in Romanian' may be safely removed from the list.

The most interesting Romanian form *sută* was once analysed, together with Slavic *sъto* in a quite consistent paper in *Slavistična Revija* (initially written in English, then translated by editors into Slovene, later included in a volume of studies; a variant of it was also included in our doctoral thesis – Paliga 1988, a topic resumed in 1997 and, with some revisions and additions in Paliga 2006: 187 ff.). As we analysed the multiple aspects of the relation Rom. *sută* v. Slavic *sъto* we shall not resume the whole discussion here. Just a note though: even a furtive glance at the form **sъto* shows that it I 'outside the Slavic numeral system', as the expected form should have a nasal in its root, just like the numerals for '10' and '100'. In other words, an archaic Balto- slavic form should have been **sęt-*, **sętь* or **sęto*, never **sъto*. There were repeated attempts to consider Slavic **sъto* a borrowing from a neighbouring language. That language should have obviously been a satem idiom, but – by elimination – could not be a Baltic idiom, nor could it be a West Iranic dialect; it could ONLY be a north Thracian vernacular. This is obvious. Of course, 'obvious' may have various interpretations in various authors: what is obvious to me may be entirely unconvincing to others. The situation of Slavic **sъto* will be clarified as we can gather together additional material showing that the North Thracian (perhaps Carpian or other north Dacian) groups had their contribution to the Slavic ethnogenesis. Both the linguistic and the archaeological evidence decisively supports this hypothesis. It is not the high time for a global consideration, but we are indeed quite close to it. This paper is such a modest step ahead[1]. Any serious, keen analysis may also safely conclude that Romanian *sută* is NOT a Slavic borrowing, early or not early. It is, beyond any reasonable doubt, a substratum, Thracian form; it is also of Thracian origin in Proto-Slavic too; and it is NOT the only such example. It should be also removed from Duridanov's list.

The forms *stăpân* and *jupân* were also analysed: Paliga 1987 (initially in *Linguistica*) then, resuming the topic from the perspective of 'the suffix of leadership' (*Herrscherschaft* and *Herrschersuffix*[2]) in Paliga 2002. The topic had been yet

[1] I do not want to comment on Marko Snoj's criticism on my explanation as presented in the last volume of France Bezlaj's etymological dictionary. The authors asserts that my explanation is 'najmanj utemeljeno', without giving any argument. Until solid arguments are really invoked, I maintain it, being proved by already numerous other examples and cross analyses.

[2] We started, in fact, from an outstanding study of Isabelle Koock- Fontanille, who had analysed this suffix in the Hittite terms referring to *Herrscherschaft*. Our view is that Thracian agrees with Hittite in some important details, including the preservation of a specific phoneme, presumably a

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

approached on another occasions as well, e.g. Paliga 1997 and, in the revised edition, Paliga 2006, in the chapter dedicated to the terms referring to social and political organisation. We then showed that the etymological analysis suggests the reconstruction of some basic forms with root **ban-, *pan-*, hence *ban* 'a local leader' and later, at a given historical moment, also 'coin', when the local leaders began to issues coins as a token of their authority (a problem already explained by Hasdeu more than a century ago). This root later developed as *stă-pân* and *ju-pân* < *giu-pân (ǧu-pân*), with the evolution *ǧ* > *j* as in the Latin elements of Romanian, e.g. *joc* < *ǧoc* etc. These are NOT, therefore, Slavic elements. If doubt may still persist, then we stress: for sure, they are not 'archaic Slavic elements in Romanian'. Another axiom proves false. Both *jupîn (jupân*) and *stăpân* are of indigenous, Thracian origin and, again, also borrowed in early Slavic (representatives of satem substratum C, see below).

Măgură 'a narrow pass in the mountains' and *mătură* 'a broom', both with stressed *ă* (3rd syllable from the end of the word, proparoxytone) akin to the stress in *cumătră* (paroxytone) < postclassical Latin**cumatra*, classic *commater* (cf. Fr. *commère*, Sp. *comadre* etc.)[1]. This form cannot be held for 'Slavic', despite its being referred to as such in some reference works, e.g. the DEX. The switch to the first declension is like in **sora* < *soror*, but pl. *surori (< sorores)*.

Both *măgură* and *mătură* are also indigenous (Thracian) elements, quoted as such in most works dedicated to this topic. True, Sl. *metati* 'to sweep (with a broom)' would be a tempting comparison, but in the field of comparative Indo- European linguistics, not as a borrowing. The phonetic evolution would not allow such a derivation either, so it is indeed curious why Ivan Duridanov, otherwise an exquisite and scrupulous analyst, supports such a view. Anyway, both *măgură* and *mătură* cannot be included in that list either.

In the last, the list still includes *baltă* 'a pond; a lake', *daltă '*chisel*', gard '*a fence*' smântână* 'milk cream'*, stână* 'a sheep shelter'. The form *gard* has been gradually included in more and more lists of the indigenous heritage of Romanian, as a borrowing from Slavic *gradъ* 'a protected area, a fortress', before the metathesis of liquids, is hardly acceptable; the semantic sphere and the phonetic evolution do not support the hypothesis of a Slavic borrowing, and – at last – most linguists now agree with this view. We should remind Bonfante's hypothesis, quoted above, that a Proto-Romanian influence seems to have led to the open syllables in early Slavic, therefore *gradъ* < **gard-* would rather reflect a Proto-Romanian influence or, perhaps, a Thracian element in Slavic and, before that, in Romanian, e.g. like *sută* discussed above.

In its turn, *baltă* has long become a common element in the list of indigenous elements

---

velar spirant (Nikolaj Dmitrievič Andreev's term) or a laryngeal (the 'classical', consecrated term). Unfortunately, such details have remained ignored so far. It is high time to correct this situation.

[1] See the final part of this paper, where we analyse the case of *cumătră.*

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

in Romanian. During the last decades, it has become common in any list of the substratum elements in Romanian. Curiously, its obviously similar relative *daltă* 'a chisel' continues to be held for a Slavic borrowing, even if the phonetic aspect *baltă–daltă* and, on the other hand, *gard* makes it a serious candidate for the list of indigenous elements, not less convincing than *baltă* and *gard*. The author of this paper does not see why *baltă* and *gard* may be now held for indigenous, Thracian elements in Romanian, but *daltă* should be held for a Slavic borrowing. There is no logical argument and, therefore, I shall also exclude this form from the list.

Finally, *smântână* and *stână* once seemed Slavic borrowings, in the tradition of the theory 'any non-Romance element in Romanian must be a Slavic borrowing'. True again, the parallel *smetana ~ smântână* and *stan ~ stână* are obviously related; but, as in the case of other similar examples, the phonetic details do not allow to postulate a borrowing from Slavic into Romanian. And, as a general observation, the Romanian terminology referring to milk processing is either indigenous or Latin, 'intruders' are indeed rare and relatively new, mainly referring to specific way of processing milk, previously unknown, e.g. *iaurt* (an international term, in fact) and *caşcaval*, a solid cheese.

Summing up, only three forms may be concessively accepted as 'Slavic': *smântână, daltă* and *stână*; accepting them seems plausible only at first sight and for the sake of concession, as a serious phonetic and extralinguistic analysis does not in fact support such a view. Briefly, all these would-be 'early Slavic elements in Romanian' are, in fact, indigenous, substratum elements. Some of them are indeed similar to some Slavic forms, but this has other explanations, not the mere borrowing from Slavic into Romanian. These were clichés of the 19th century, loosely transmitted from one generation to another, without a serious analysis. I would also stress the idea that if not, probably most of, these Slavic forms witness the satem stratum C (Thracian), as analysed below.

Do the forms *Sclaveni / Sclavi* mean „Slavs"? What was the meaning of „Sclavenus / Sclavus" in the 6th to 8th centuries A.D.?

The reality of the first millennium A.D. and mainly the reality expressed by 'the age of migrations' should be well understood and well analysed, as this is the only way to decipher the meaning hidden behind some usual terms, but with variable meaning in time. We refer, of course, to what is currently labelled *Barbaricum*, as it may have been perceived in the 7th-8th centuries A.D., when Europe was undergoing an ample ethno-linguistic, but also religious change; mentalities were also on the move. Each such detail requires deep investigations, therefore just a few words here.

First of all, 'ethnogenesis' is a modern convention just like the phrase 'the first millennium is an ethnogenetic millennium'. Be it analysed conventionally or not, the first millennium was indeed a complex period as within a quite short period of time,

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

mainly from 4th to 10th centuries, the changes were so radical and spectacular – if we are looking at it like at a theatre play, as we often do – so any comparison with other periods of known history seems unconvincing. The discontinuous evolution was so radical, that even steadfast ethnic groups, in principle remaining on their ancient territories, practically re-wrote their history from the scratch. As a convenient example, the modern Greeks and the Italians – the direct heirs of the ancient Romans – completely forgot their ancient gods; they remained anchored in the conservative, but otherwise meaningless, days of the week.

Monday (Spanish *lunes*, French *lundi*, Romanian *luni* etc.) reminds the veneration of the Moon; the second day, *martes, mardi, marți* reminds the veneration of god Mars; the third day, *miercoles, mercredi, miercuri...* reminds the god Mercurius; Thursday is indeed *dies Jovis* and Friday the day of goddess Venus. Equally, the 'heathen' elements of the modern cultures seem re-writings of the old conceptions rather than preservation of archaic elements. Exceptions are indeed rare, e.g. English *Easter*, reminding *Ēastre*, the goddess of dawn; also English *Yule* 'Christmas', an old Germanic religious term; or Romanian *Crăciun* 'Christmas' but also, at dialectal level, 'a log, a piece of wood', obviously an indigenous Thracian element (cf. Bulgarian *bădni večer* 'the night of logs' = Albanian *nata e buzmit*)[1].

It is also evident that the Slavic ethnogenesis, be it a more or less conventional label, cannot be analysed independently from other contemporary 'ethnogenetic phenomena', as they occurred between the 4th and 10th centuries A.D. In other words, the Slavic ethnogenesis is a chapter of the vast European ethnogenesis, with common and uncommon, specific, local elements, with clear and unclear, dim parts. These peculiar, specific, sometimes dim details are the most important, as they discriminate the Slavs against the Germanic or Romance ethnic groups.

Thirdly, defining the Slavs as they may be such labelled in the 6th through 10th centuries is not exactly the easiest task. Nevertheless, it should be added that we have the same difficulty in trying to define the Germanic groups or the Romance groups of those times, as they were also witnessing a long and complex process of ethno-linguistic changes. This is, in fact, the key of the whole issue: to understand and than to accept the basic idea that the ethno-genetic processes within the mentioned interval are ample and dynamic phenomena; a given social and economic reality in the 6th century was not the same two centuries later. The Germanic groups of the Franks 'transferred' their ethnic name to a Romance group, thus contributing to reshaping it as 'the French'. In another part of Europe, the Altaic group of the Bulgars (incorrectly, but usually labelled 'Proto-Bulgars') transferred their ethnic name to a Slavic groups, the Bulgarians[2]. Both cases (and the list may be enriched with other examples) show dynamic phenomena, and this

[1] Romanian *Crăciun* cannot reflect Latin *creatio, creationem*, an old, but entirely erroneous etymology. It has no basis, and should be abandoned for ever and for good.

[2] There may be hot debates, but the ethnic name *Bulgar* seems the only Bulgarian word preserved from the language of the Altaic Bulgars; others are Altaic (or Turkic) words, not Proto-Bulgar.

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

is – in fact – the clue to the whole issue. Turning this dynamism into a static analysis may be indeed an easier, and thus a more convenient, way to do it, what at what price! This is why many analyses of the 19th and 20th centuries are useless in the wake of the new historical and sociological views regarding history. They were largely, and deeply, affected by the political views of the moment, with catastrophic consequences.

We digressed from the main thread for just underlining, via neighbouring examples, that defining the Slavs of the 6th-10th centuries A.D. is not indeed an easy task: the times were confuse and full of unrest, the ethnic groups were on a permanent move; and, for sure, far from being 'ethnically pure'. The ethnic purity is a Romantic invention, and turned into an aggressive ideology after WW 1.

Both the linguistic analyses and the occurrences in documents show that the *Sclaveni* of the 6th century were only partially (even if in a majority) the precursors of the Slavs as they were later known. Beautiful pages were written on this topic by Ján Pauliny in his remarkable *Arabské správy o Slovanoch* (Pauliny 1999). At the court of the Arab khalifs, *Ṣaqlab (Ṣiqlab, Ṣaqlāb),* pl. *Ṣaqāliba* meant 'a blond slave', which clearly shows that we still are in a period when the term *Sclavenus, Sclavus* had social, rather than ethnic connotations. Of course, a 'blond slave' already began to get ethnic connotations, even if they may be considered very far from our definition of *ethnicum*. Or, trying to imagine ourselves in those times, the ethnic connotations were so different from ours, that it would be bold to use them as such, without a careful filter and re-interpretation. To us, from a linguistic point of view, **the emerging ethnic group first known as *Sclaveni, Sclavi* was an amalgamation of THREE satem idioms**, to which Germanic (mainly Gothic), East Romance (at that time, Proto-Romanian) and some Finno-Ugric elements were also added across time.

The Slavs were, around the mid-5th century, a group in motion, as described and analysed by Kazymierz Godłowski. We may reconstruct with fair precision, but not with absolute certitude, as the archaeological evidence is unclear and scarce (and I doubt it will ever be otherwise), tat those groups, amalgamating the elements quoted above, concur in gradually becoming an ethnic group, a long–lasting phenomenon and not easy to reconstruct (and not indeed very easy to understand from the perspective of modern thought[1]). Godłowski in fact complements what Florin Curta recently presented in his book on the early Slavic archaeology.

If we start from a would-be Proto-Slavic A, of Balto-Slavic character, and a Proto-Slavic B, of West Iranic character, as defined by Aleksandar Loma at the International Congress of Slavists in Ljubljana, August 2003[2], I suggested the following stratification of what we conventionally label Proto-Slavic or, as I once wrote, Pre-Expansion Slavic. It is our firm conviction that there were **three satem components of early or Pre-**

[1] To just note that the generic term *Slovanstvo* got its contours in the Romantic period.

[2] Across years, I had two discussions with Dr. Loma: in 2002 in Brno; then in 2003, during the named Congress. Unfortunately, the final form of his paper has not been available to me, just the abridged form distributed during the proceedings of the Congres.

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

Expansion Slavic, thus:

– Proto-Slavic A – the main component of Balto-Slavic character; we may label it **satem stratum A**.

– Proto-Slavic B – West Iranic component; we might equally label it **satem stratum B**. (We preserve the two classifications as suggested by Aleksandar Loma in 2003).

– Proto-Slavic C – **late North Dacian (Thracian), probably of Carpian character**, or perhaps even more northern elements, maybe belonging to the Costobocae; we may label it **satem stratum C**.

– Stratum D – Germanic elements, mainly Gothic; there are also interesting correspondences between Germanic and Proto-Slavic, not always allowing a clear position on the question 'who borrowed from whom' – are these Slavic elements in Germanic or Germanic elements in Slavic?

– Stratum E – early East Romance (Proto-Romanian) elements; not numerous, but significant, e.g. *cumătră* > *kъmotra* (see the case study below);

– Stratum F – Finno-Ugric elements.

– Other, various elements, of different origins, including words of unnown origin; conventionally labelled as 'G elements'.

In our view, **the three satem components A, B and C** are the most important in contouring the 'Slavic ethos'. It was a long, meandering process, which began before 550; we may reconstruct its beginning as a gradual congregation of elements, some time in the 5th century, and continuing 'in move' until the 9th century. The Finno-Ugric influence should not be put down, as witnessed by indeed not frequent, but interesting parallels like *kniga* (**kъńiga, *kńiga*) – Hungarian *könyv* 'book' or *slovo* – Hungarian *szó*, plural *szava* 'a word'. See our list of 100 Slavic basic roots (Paliga 2004).

One more detail, hopefully relevant: the Albanians are also the heirs of those *Sclaveni* of the 6th century, as proved by ethnonym *shqipe* 'Albanian', *shqip* (adj.), see a more detailed discussion in Paliga and Teodor 2009: 80-84. To add here the brief discussion in the etymological dictionary of Albanian by Vladimir Orel (1998). Other research in the field also proves what we wrote in Paliga and Teodor 2009, but also earlier: Alb. *Shqipe, Shqiptar* etc. also reflects a late, post-classical form *sclavus*, a variant **skljab* being reconstructable for Albanian. Orel (1998: 434) assumes that *shqipe* would be a calque after the Slavic parallel *slověne* 'Slavs' as derived from *slovo* 'word', in Albanian *shqipoj* 'to speak clearly = to speak in our language' – *Shqipe, Shqiptar*. Thus put, the whole issue has no sense. It is not the first and last time when speakers of a given language associate 'speaking in their own language' with the idea 'to speak clearly', i.e. 'to speak in a language we can understand'. That was the motivation of the parallel *slověne – slovo*, also *magyar* 'Hungarian' – *magyaráz(ni)* 'to speak clearly' (= to speak in our langue), *shqipe* 'Albanian' – *shqipoj* 'to speak clearly' etc. Therefore, the parallel *shqipe – shqipoj* cannot be based on a calque, this is difficult to reconstruct at a popular

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

level in those times or later; this is an internal, logical derivation based on the obvious and frequently attested reality 'ours speak a language we can understand' versus 'the others, who speak a language we cannot understand' = they are dumb (cf. Slavic *něm-* 'dumb' used for referring to the *němьcь*, lit. 'the dumb ones') or speak with a stutter (cf. Greek *barbaros*, lit. 'those who stutter') etc. Such extralinguistic realities make part of a correct interpretation of the facts, too.

The Albanians are, therefore, another 'Sclavenic group', but – we cannot be very far from reality – of Thracian origin, most probably of Carpian origin, as I. I. Russu brilliantly suggested as early as 1982. Unfortunately, it was difficult to have a serious debate of his hypothesis in those days[1]. They moved NEXT TO the Slavs *proprie dictu*, but not melting into their groups. This proves that the FIRST Slavic move occurred indeed from north to south following the courses of Siret and Prut rivers, then crossing the Danube. Perhaps the Proto-Albanians preceded the Slavic movement, this explaining why they settled in the remotest location, beyond the extremity of the southwest Slavs. They were also *Sclaveni*, post-classical colloquial form *sclavi* > Romanian *șchiau, șchei*, Albanian *shqipe*. For the Byzantines, they were *Sclaveni*, *Sklavenoi*, the new enemies coming from the north. We may be sure that, at the beginning at least, the Byzantines made no linguistic difference between the Proto-Albanians and the rest of the *Sclaveni*, they were all foreign enemies. disregarding the language they spoke.

Consequences

The consequences of these realities are clear enough when we want to resume the long-lasting discussions, still unfinished, regarding the Slavic elements in Romanian and their relations with the indigenous (Thracian, or substratum) elements. If we accept the basic hypothesis that non-Romanised, north Thracian (Carpian) groups contributed to the Slavic ethnogenesis, then the problem of the indigenous elements in Romanian as compared to the Slavic elements gets new contours, and allows to understand why similar forms in Romanian and Slavic should be considered as substratum, not Slavic, elements. True, the problem is sometimes difficult and requires exquisite linguistic tools, but – not rarely – the discrimination is obvious and should be accepted as such.

In the light of these data, we may conclude that we cannot accept such early Slavic

[1] In the preface of his work, Orel (1998: X) assumes that the Albanian homeland may be located in Dacia Ripensis, specifically the Beskydy, Polish Bieszczady mountains. The Proto-Albanians had, beyond any doubt, a more northern origin, and we cannot hesitate to assume a homeland beyond the Danube. It is yet impossible to accept the area suggested by Orel, as there is no archaeological proof or any other reasonable proof, of any kind, allowing to accept the Beskydy as the Proto-Albanian homeland. The obvious similarities between Romanian and Albanian, but also the differences, show that there must have been a vicinity, which must have been, precisely, the Moldavian plain and the East Carpathians, with intrusions in the Transylvanian plateau after the Roman withdrawal in 274. This location does indeed make sense, and is supported by all the documents regarding the 'Carpian issue' after the Roman conquest of Dacia in 105-106.

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

elements in Romanian as dating back to the 6th and 7th centuries. This was an illusion, a direct result of the chaotic view regarding the substratum elements in Romanian and southeast Europe in general. The earliest Slavic elements of Romanian may be dated not earlier than 12th century, rather the end of the 12th century, if not the beginning of the 13th century! This may seem indeed too late, at least if we compare the whole issue with the traditional view of the earliest borrowings in the 6th-7th centuries. Five centuries later is not just a play with time, it is a radically different view, which must lead to a radical reconsideration of the whole problem.

A special attention should be given to the problem of the Slavic river-names in Transylvania. As curious as may seem, none may be clearly dated earlier than the same 12th century! This is indeed curious but, given the same chaotic analysis of the archaic Romanian place- and river-‑ naming, it should be resumed from the scratch, in an ample attempt. I just furtively note that Transylvania is also the region where most substratum (Thracian) place- and river-names have been preserved to modern times (despite the largely spread view that there are just a few). Can we trace any 'early Slavic river-names there'? The answer will be attempted on another occasion, hopefully not too late.

Instead of conclusions, a case study: *cumătră*

While giving a final shape to this paper, it so happened we tempted to refer to *cumătră* 'a woman assisting baptism of a child' (in concurrence with *naşă* 'god-mother', masculine *naş* 'god-father'). We referred to *dexonline.ro*, then the etymological dictionary of Ciorănescu (2002), then a last attempt to a recently published etymological dictionary of Romanian (Vinereanu 2009), again referred to the last printed version of the DEX. Even an experimented linguist in questions of etymology, as I dare name myself, is effectively lost in a maze of incoherent approaches. I have all the reasons to believe that, a 'normal' reader, i.e. a reader looking for the etymology of this word (*cumătră*) is hopelessly lost, entirely proving the adagio *Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate qui.* The series represented by the DEX (including its online version dexonline.ro) and the available etymological dictionaries of Romanian (Ciorănescu, Raevskij and, very recently, Vinereanu) are so confuse, so unclear, that the poor reader is really put down by ignorance and confuse mindedness.

To be specific though: the last printed version of DEX, the one found in my personal library (1996), does not mention *cumătră*, but refers to the masculine form *cumătru*, considered as derived from Slavic *kŭmotra!* The internet version of DEX, accurately reflecting the printed form, but also now including some other dictionaries, quotes some names of plants under entry *cumătră, e.g. ciocul-cucoarei, pliscul-cocorului, pliscul cucoarei, priboi*[1].

[1] We hasten to add that *dexonline.ro* is NOT, as some may think, the internet version of the DEX or, otherwise put, it has something to do with the Romanian Academy. *www.dexonline.ro* is the private and wonderful initiative of a Romanian who, several years ago, settled in U.S.A and, together with a group of enthusiasts, did what the Romanian Academy had not done: the internet

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

Entirely chaotic, unreadable, is Ciorănescu's 'explanation' (Ciorănescu 2002); less chaotic, but still unconvincing, is the explanation in Vinereanu (2009).

The author of this paper [Sorin Paliga] also analysed the form *cumătră*, first in Paliga 1997, then in the reprinted and revised version of the book. I would like to quote (in translation, without essential changes, in a just somewhat abridged form), what I wrote on *cumătră* more than 12 years ago (Paliga 2006: 55 ff.). The translation follows the original in Romanian. We do not include the references to this appendix, they may be found in the PDF form of the book, which may be downloaded free from our webpages of the University of Bucharest: http://www.unibuc.ro/ro/cd_sorpaliga_ro (Romanian) or http://www.unibuc.ro/en/cd_sorpaliga_en (English). […]

A peculiar discussion should consider the case of post–classical Latin ***cumatra*** (classical Latin *commater*, ac. *commatrem*). The Romance character of the word is known and was observed a long time ago (Miklosich 1886: 154 who compares the Romanian and Slavic forms, and suggests to explain Slavic *kъmotrъ* from Latin *compater*, with the conclusion that it is *ein pannonisches Wort* in Slavic). In his history of the Romanian language, Rosetti (1986) does not refer to this form, with the general meaning 'a person assisting baptism of a child: god-mother'. Machek (262), after quoting the Slavic forms (OCS *kъmotra*, Czech *kmotr, kmotra*, Slovak *kmotor, kmotra*, Old Russian and dialectal modern Russian *kmotr*, Polish *kmotr, kmotra*, Upper Lusacian *kmótr, kmótra*, Lower Lusacian *kmotš, kmotša*) showed that all derive from a colloquial, post-classical form **kumater* (classical *commater*), which was borrowed, seemingly at an early date, as proved by the situation in the Slavic languages.

Mihăilă (1974: 93) assumes that Romanian preserves the word directly from Latin, without any Slavic intermediary. The colloquial Latin origin is beyond any reasonable doubt, as proved by the West Romance parallel forms (French *commère*, Spanish and Portuguese *comadre).* Older and newer research agrees on the detail that both West and East Romance have preserved Latin *commater*, accusative *commatrem*, with the note that East Romance later developed the form **comátra* (not **kumáter*, suggested by Machek), with a switch to the first declension, very productive in Late, postclassical Latin, as proved by other forms in Romanian, e.g. *mână – manus, soră – soror*, but plural form *surori – sorores*, also *soru-mea, soră-mea* 'my sister'). The existence of the word in southeast Europe was noted in Mihăescu (1978: 241/ par. 230 and 292/ par. 300).

An ample discussion regarding the situation of the Romanian form is due to Sextil Pușcariu (1943). His demonstration mainly approached the situation of stressed *ă*, perhaps from an initial accent *cúmătră*. I would remind that stressed *ă* is witnessed in Romanian under various circumstances, e.g. *a vedea-văd* 'to see – I see'*, fără* 'without' (< *fora*)*, mătură* 'a broom'*, mălură* (also stressed *mălúră*), a disease of wheat, *Tilletia*

---

version of DEX. Our critical view is targeted to the very authors of the DEX, not to dexonline.ro which is an accurate transcription of the printed form.

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

tritici etc. The stress in *cumătră* is as in *mătură* and *mălură*, in the sequence stressed *ă* followed by *r* in the following syllable.

The data as a whole do not allow to postulate a Slavic origin of *cumătră*, i.e. that a Slavic idiom may be considered an intermediary between Latin and Romanian. The Slavic idioms must have borrowed the form from Proto-Romanian, from **cumátra*, with *u* reflected as *ъ*, with the same phonetic evolution analysed elsewhere (Paliga 1988 b; see the case of Slavic *sъto*). Therefore, a post-classical form **cumatra* < **comatra* (as compared to *commatrem* in *Romania Occidentalis*) explains the Romanian form, and the same form was borrowed by the Slavs as *kъmotra*. Obviously, the feminine form is the oldest, whereas the masculine form *cumătru* was later reshaped by analogy with other similar forms, e.g. *cuscru – cuscră, socru – soacră* etc. The same phenomenon occurred in Slavic, where *kъmotrъ* is reshaped by analogy. Masc. *kъmotrъ* may be yet interpreted as an internal evolution, see the case *vьdova* > *vьdovьcь* 'widow' > 'widower'. In this case too, the feminine form is older.

Another Slavic group preserves an abridged form: S.-Cr. *kûm* (pl. *kùmovi*, f. *kúma*), Slovene *kûm*, f. *kûma*, Macedonian and Bulgarian *kum*, Russian *kum* (gen. *kúma, kumá*), Ukrainian *kum, kumá*. The abridged form is mainly specific to South Slavic, but also to Russian and Ukrainian (dialectal forms in Russian also preserve the long form – see Skok 1971-1974, 2: 231-232: 'hypochoristic'; Bezlaj 1976-1982, 2: 109; Gluhak 1993: 358). South Slavic forms cannot be analysed independently from Albanian *kúme = kumtër (kumptër)* = Romanian *cumătru*, f. *kumë* = Romanian *cumătră*.

Chronology

When may have *cumătră* been borrowed by the Slavs? Let us attempt a chronology by elimination. As the word is well documented in all the Slavic languages, a very early borrowing may be assumed. The counterargument may be that we cannot prove such early contacts between East Romance (Proto-Romanians) and Slavs. The proofs of the last decades would rather indicate the contrary. At the other extreme, one might assume a borrowing the 8th or 9th centuries A.D., but such a late date cannot explain the word in Russian and Polish. I am inclined to assume a borrowing immediately around (or immediately after) 550, i.e. when the Slavic expansion meant, among others, closer contacts with East Romance. Such a chronology is proved by other examples as well, e.g. *sъto*. […]

It is probable, that the shorter forms *kum, kuma* (Serbian-Croatian, Slovene, Bulgarian Macedonian, also in Russian), but paralleled in Albanian too, reflect an innovation, an affective form (Skok's hypothesis). It is yet difficult to reconstruct such a form already in Proto-Romanian or to assume that it was an innovation in Slavic. The Albanian forms would rather support an East Romance innovation, lost in Romanian, but preserved in some Slavic idioms and in Albanian.

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

References

Bonfante, Giuliano 1966. Influences du protoroumain sur le protoslave? *Acta Philologica* 5: 53-69

Bonfante, G. 2001. *Studii române.* Bucureşti: Saeculum I.O. (Original: Giuliano Bonfante, *Studii romeni*, Societá Accademica Romena, Collana di studii e saggi, VI, Roma, 1973)

Ciorănescu, Alexandru 2002. *Dicţionarul etimologic al limbii române.* Bucureşti: Saeculum

Curta, Florin 2006. *Apariţia slavilor. Istorie şi arheologie la Dunărea de Jos în veacurile VI-VII.* Târgovişte: Cetatea de Scaun. (Traducere de Eugen S. Teodor după originalul în limba engleză: *The Making of the Slavs. History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500-700*. Cambridge University Press 2001)

Duridanov, Ivan 1986. Pulpudeva, Plovdiv, Plovdin. *Linguistique Balkanique* 29, 4: 25-34

Duridanov, Iv. 1989. Nochmals zum namen *PLЪPDIVЪ, PLOVDIV*. *Linguistique Balkanique* 32, 1: 19-22

Duridanov, Iv. 1991. Die ältesten slawishen Entlehnungen im Rumänischen. *Linguistique Balkanique* 34, 1-2: 3-19

Duridanov, Iv. 1993. Bulgarian *Bădni (večer), bădnik* again. *Linguistique Balkanique* 36, 2: 101-104

Duridanov, Iv. 1995. Thrak. *DEVA, DIVA*. *Studia in honorem Georgii Mihailov*, ed. by Alexandre Fol (ed. in chief), Bogdan Bogdanov, Petăr Dimitrov, Dimităr Bojadžiev. Sofia: Institute of Thracology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Duridanov, Iv. 1997-1998. Zur Mythologie der Thraker. *Linguistique Balkanique* 39 (1997-1998), 3-4: 105-108

Godłowski, Kazimierz 2000. *Pierwotne siedziby Słowian*. Wybór pism pod redakcją Michała Parczewskiego. Kraków: Instytut Archeologii Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego

Mihăilă, Gheorghe 1971. Criteriile determinării împrumuturilor slave în limba română. *Studii şi cercetări lingvistice* 22, 4: 351-366

Orel, Vladimir 1998. *Albanian Etymological Dictionary*. Leiden-Boston-Köln: E. J. Brill

Paliga, Sorin 1987. The social structure of the southeast European societies in the Middle Ages. A linguistic view. *Linguistica* 27: 111-126

Paliga, S. 1988. Slovansko *sъto – izzivalen problem? (in Slovene with an English abstract: Slavic **sъto* – a challenging problem?). *Slavistična Revija* 36, 4: 349-358

Paliga, S. 1990. Este boieria o instituţie împrumutată? *Revista Arhivelor* 67, vol. 52, 3: 250-260

Paliga, S. 1991. Aperçu de la structure étymologique du roumain. *Linguistica* 31: 99-106 (Paulo Tekavčić sexagenario in honorem oblata)

Paliga, S. 1993. Slovani, Romunci in Albanci v 1. tisočletju. *Slavistična Revija* 41, 2: 237-243

Paliga S. 1997. *Influenţe romane şi preromane în limbile slave de sud.* Doctoral thesis. Bucureşti: Lucretius Publishers

Paliga, S. 2001 a. Oris zgodovine Slovanov. *Slavistična Revija* (Ljubljana) 49, 4: 327-349

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

(in Slovene with an English abstract: *Sketching a History of the Slavs*)

Paliga, S. 2001 b. Ten Theses on Thracian Etymology. *Thraco-Dacica* XXII, 1-2: 33-46

Paliga, S. 2002. *Herrscherschaft* and *Herrschersuffix* in Central-East European Languages. *Linguistica* (Ljubljana): 9-18

Paliga, S. 2004. 100 Slavic Basic Roots: once again on Slavic *сѣто* and the Slavic ethnogenesis. *Romanoslavica* 40 (București: Asociația Slaviștilor din România): 67-86

Paliga, S. 2006. *Influențe romane și preromane în limbile slave de sud*. Ed. a 2-a revăzută și adăugită (prima ed.: 1997). București: Ed. Evenimentul

Paliga, S. 2008. Linguistic Marginalia on Slavic Ethnogenesis. Paper for the International Congress of Slavists, Ohrid, Macedonia, September 10–17, 2008. *Romanoslavica 43*

Paliga, Sorin, Eugen Silviu Teodor 2009. *Lingvistica și arheologia slavilor timpurii. O altă vedere de la Dunărea de Jos.* Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun

Pauliny, Ján 1999. *Arabské správy o Slovanoch* (Documente arabe despre slavi). Bratislava: Veda

Vinereanu, Mihai 2009. *Dicționar etimologic al limbii române pe baza cercetărilor de indo-europenistică*. București: Alcor

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

Table 1
The main forms related to and derived from *Sclavus, Sclavenus, Sclavini*

Slavic *	Byzantium	Arabic	East Romance (Romanian)	Albanian
slovo 'word' > *Slověninъ*, pl. *Slověne* 'those who speak the same language' Modern Slavic: Slovene *slovenec, slovenski;* Slovak: *Slovák, slovenský.*	*Sclaveni, Sclavini* (oldest), later *Σκλάβοι, Sklavoi, Sclavus;* **	*Ṣaqlab, Ṣiqlab, Ṣaqlāb,* pl. *Ṣaqāliba* *** 'blond slave'	*șchiau*, pl. *șchei* (< *sclavus, sclavi*) 'a Slav', now obsolete, only in place-names: *Șcheia*, *Șcheii Brașovului* etc. Arom. *șcl'eáŭ* 'a servant, a serf'.	*shqipe* 'Albanian' (noun), *Shqiptar* (<**sklya-b-*); *Shqinikë* < *Sclavenica* (Dardania, i.e. *regio sclavenica*); *Shqa, Shkla, Shkle* 'bulgar' ****

Explanations to the table

* Slavic *Slověninъ*, pl. *Slověne* is the source of postclassical Latin *Sclaveni, Sklavenoi*, with an unclear non-epenthetic *c (k)*, in its turn derived from *slovo* 'word'; the general, initial meaning must have been 'we, those who speak a common, mutually intelligible language'. The preservation of these ethnic until modern times (the Slovaks and the Slovenes) proves that it must have existed in those time as well. It is highly debatable whether *Sclavenus, Sclavus* may be labelled 'a borrowing' from the vernacular first heard by the East Romance speakers, it rather seems an approximate adaptation of the initial form *Slověne*. The colloquial form *Sclavi*, preserved in Romanian and Albanian seems later, at least according to the available documents, but is the one, which survived over centuries.

** Romanian *șchiau,* pl. *șchei* show that *sclavus, sclavi* were the usual, colloquial forms. This is also proved by Albanian forms, which—in their turn—also reflect the same root preserved at colloquial level: *shqip-, shqa-* . Aromanian form is still closer to the postclassical prototype.

*** Obviously the Arabisation of a form **sclav-, *sclab-*, cf. the Albanian form. (< **skljab, skljap*). The meaning is remarkable, and shows that, at that time, the forms did not yet consolidate as an *ethnicum*, but rather referring to a social status.

**** Albanian witnesses what we know from the written sources of the 6th to 10th centuries A.D. : the forms *Sclaveni, Sklavenoi*. together with their Arabic parallels, were conventional forms referring to more ethnic groups, not to one and unique ethnic group.

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)

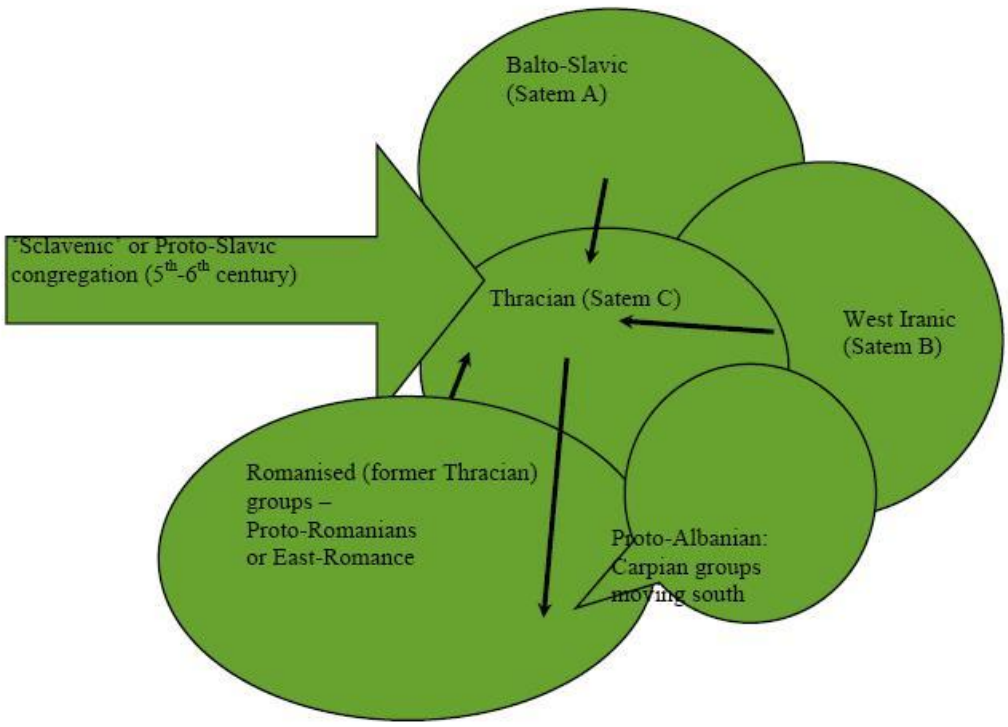
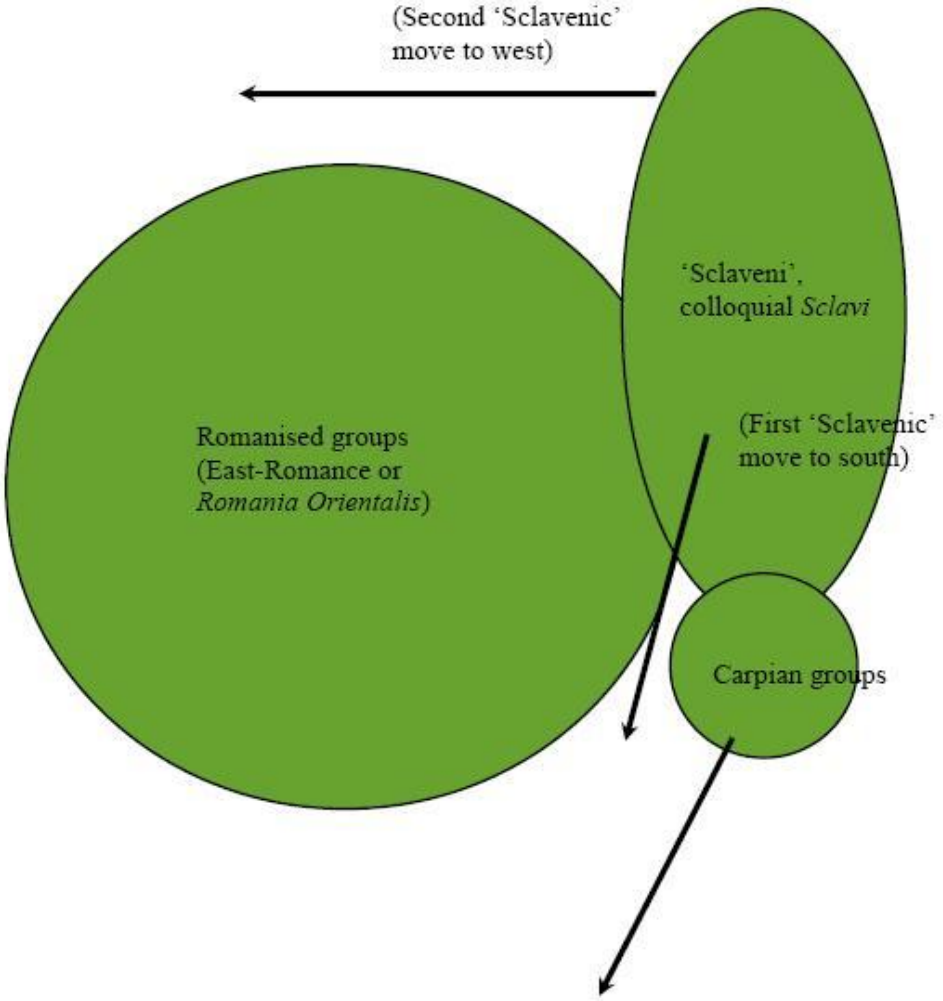


Figure A

A loose distribution of the main ethnic groups in the 5th century and beginning of the 6th century A.D. What we conventionally label 'Proto-Slavic'is a gradual, but quite fast, congregation of THREE satem speakers: Balto-Slavic (A), West Iranic (B) and North Thracian (C – probably Carpian, at that time not yet Romanisedgroups). Some speakers of this Carpian large group must have preserved a certainindependence from the other neighbours, and move south, preceding the large 'Sclavenic' move.

All these groups were named *Sclaveni*, colloquial *Sclavi*by the Romanised population, including the Byzantines. *Sclaveni*initially had a social and military, rather than ethnic, meaning. The process of 'ethnicisation' lasted several centuries, and – as *Slovanstvo* – got its climax in the Romantic period, i.e. 19th century.

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)



'Sclavenic' groups at the beginning of the 6th century, a congregation of Balto-Slavic, West Iranic and Carpian (North Thracian) groups. They consolidate theirstructure at the eastern limit of *Romania*, and begin to move first south, then west. Some Carpian groups must have preserved a certain autonomy, and were laterknown as Albanian, in their own language preserving the old, late Latin name*Sclavi* >**skljab* > *shqipe*. These Carpian groups must have preceded the'Sclavenic' ample move proper, and settled in the remotest location, in what istoday Albania.

BDD-A24215 © 2010 Editura Universității din București
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:49:34 UTC)