THE BULGARIAN INDEFINITE ARTICLE
REVISITED IN ITS BALKAN CONTEXT

Victor A. Friedman

The grammaticalization of expressions of definiteness is one of the oldest Balkanisms both in terms of possible attestation and in terms of identification as such. Thus, for example, Hamp (1982:79) concludes after careful etymological argument that the name of the ancient site of Drobeta – located on the Danube near modern Turnu Severin in northwestern Oltenia (Romania) – contains “a Latin misunderstanding or mispairing in Moesia Inferior of *drugā-īā, a definite noun phrase with postposed article.” As such, it gives “direct evidence in the Roman period of one of the most notable syntactic constructions of the Balkan Sprachbund, i.e. a specimen from the autochthonous language of the model of the Romanian postposed article which was calqued out of Latin materials.” Moreover, it constitutes “direct attestation for the common possession of this important feature linking modern Albanian with Moesia Inferior.” Similarly, Kopitar (1829:86, 106) focused particularly on the postposed definite article as the most striking example of his characterization of the linguistic territory of what today we could call Balkan Romance, Balkan Slavic, and Albanian as an area where “nur eine sprachfor mherrscht, aber mit dreierlei Sprachmaterie…” This is arguably the earliest formulation of the principle of areal linguistics underlying the concept of the Balkan Sprachbund. In this paper, however, I shall examine what can be regarded as the inverse of grammaticalized indefinite reference, namely grammaticalized indefinite reference. I shall argue that indefiniteness is grammaticalized in Bulgarian, and that historical evidence and the nature of modern parallels among the various Balkan languages support the view that the indefinite article is an areal phenomenon, i.e. a Balkansim, although it has not been identified as such in any of the standard handbooks.

Our first task, however, is to address the issue of the expression of indefiniteness of Bulgarian, specifically the question whether edun and its co-forms can be analyzed as an indefinite article at all. According to a recent article by Avgustinova (1998:15): “The existence of an indefinite article in Bulgarian, addressed, for example, in Friedman 1976, is still a controversial issue and a matter of on-going linguistic discussion.” Friedman (1976) was originally read at the First Bulgarian-American Conference on Bulgarian Studies (Madison, May 1973), and in that paper I concluded:
The two principal points of contention with regard to the use of edin as an indefinite article center on the differences between descriptive and normative grammar and between specific and nonspecific reference. It is clear that edin is used by educated Bulgarians with the grammaticalized, delexicalized function characteristic of an indefinite article. The real question involves the extent of this usage, i.e., the degree of grammaticalization of edin into an indefinite article. The kinds of usage frowned upon by Andrejein, Brezinski, and sometimes Maslov are all nonreferential, i.e., instances in which edin is unambiguously an indefinite article, where its only replacement would be the general form. The kinds of usage described as obligatory by Borodić and Ivančev are referential: If the object is placed before the verb and the subject, then it is being emphasized in such a way as to be only referential, i.e., specific; the relation between emphasis and reference also seems to work for the second nominative clause. The use of edin with proper names, where the usage is clearly nonreferential, might be discounted as a special case. The distinction between a referential indefinite article and an indefinite adjective or pronoun is a hazy one at best. Hence the normativists and descriptivists are not as much at variance as would first appear. Edin is used as an indefinite article in Bulgarian, especially in a semantic or syntactic context which demands a referential indefinite article. When functioning nonreferentially, edin is more readily omissible and less likely to be sanctioned unanimously by grammarians.

At the end of my paper, Vladimir Georgiev supported my conclusions by stating that the two most common actions of proofreaders at Bulgarian publishing houses are corrections in the use of masculine definite articles (the artificial literary distinction between oblique -a/-a and nominative -tom/-tom) and the removal of edin used as an indefinite article in Bulgarian public schools (Valentin Izmirlieva, Columbia University, P.C.) and prescribed in handbooks of correct usage (e.g., Brezinski 1968:48) indicate that indefinite article usage is widespread colloquially despite its sanctioned or debatable nature for grammarians. The debate has continued more or less unabated and unchanged — except for the adducing of occasional additional examples and arguments — right up to the end of the second millennium.

After reviewing the literature that I discussed in Friedman (1976) as well as material published subsequently, Mayer (1988:121) concludes: “The fact that the use of edin is obligatory in indefinite NPs expressing specificity when the NP does not carry logical stress, at least in initial position, as well as in non-specific use with personal names denoting members of a class means that there is an indefinite article in Bulgarian, although its range is more limited than, for example, in English. However, the fact that edin can function as an indefinite article in other uses, namely in non-specific and generic NPs, lends further support to its existence, despite the fact that these uses are far less frequent and in some cases even marginal (e.g., in the predicate nominative function).”

And yet, a decade later, Boidjiev, Kucharov and Penev (1998:470) state: “Не e решен въпросът с.нр., непредметен член в българския език. Става дума за "неопределяни" като edin, edha, edho, edha, някой, някой, и др. Ако се приеме наличието на такъв член (кой, разбира се, не може да бъде "неопределян", щом има формално нерамкирано непредметен форма от типа книга — трябва да му се търси друго намиране), категорията би станала тричленна (книга, една книга, книгата), тъй като не може да се прекине формално нерамкирания член, нито пък да се декларира тъждество между него и члена, маркиран с edin или някой.

По наше мнение, на този етап от развитието на българския език не е логично да се приеме наличието на непредметен член от типа една книга. Местото му е в периферията на функционално-семантичното поле на категорията.”

Peripherical or not, the arguments for grammatical status continue in force. Rather than rehearse them yet again, however, I shall proceed directly to a comparison of Bulgarian edin with its equivalents in other Balkan languages, which to the best of my knowledge has not been done before. As bases of comparison I used the first chapter of Бай Гатис (Константинов 1895) in the original Bulgarian and in Albanian (1975), Greek (1922), Macedonian (1967), Romanian (1964), Russian (1968), Serbian (Croatian) (1909), and Turkish (1972) translations as well as a series of nine passages from the Gospels’ all of which display indefinite article usage in English, which in this respect can be taken as a typical language with a very highly grammaticalized indefinite article, i.e. one in which the article’s use is obligatory in a wide variety of contexts. The passages (Mk 6:27, Jn 9:1, Mt 4:8, Mt 4:18, Mt 8:2, Mt 8:5, Mt 8:9, Mt 8:19, Mt 8:24) are given in Appendix One in the following languages (in order of occurrence): English (E), Bulgarian (B), Macedonian (M), Russian (Rn) Serbian (S), Old Church Slavonic (OCS), New Testament Greek (G), Latin (L), Romanian (Rrn), Albanian (A), Turkish (T), Romani (Arli dialect [Balkan group]; Ri-A), and Romani (Gurbet dialect [Vlax group]; Ri-G).

Table One summarizes the results from the New Testament data. The languages are presented in the order given in the appendix (except that English is at the end of the table but the beginning of the appendix). An X indicates presence on an indefinite marker in the passage in question, a O indicates absence. An asterisk indicates that the indefinite item is animate, while a dagger indicates that it is the subject of the sentence. Augustinova (1998) identifies three usages of edin as an indefinite article: identifying-specific (‘a certain one’), identifying-nonspecific (‘anyone’), and categorizing-generic (‘any and all’). Of these there, it is the first two that are by far the most common usages, but there is also one categorizing-generic example that represents the typical situation. A superscript /s/ identifies identifying-specific in Augustinova’s (1998) terminology, a superscript /g/ indicates her categorizing-generic, while lack of a superscript indicates identifying non-specific. Data for languages with unambiguous indefinite article are given in bold face, those for languages with no indefinite article are plain, and those that pattern in between are italic and bold face.

Table 1: Presence of indefinite marker
* = animate, t = subject, * = specific, = generic

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Despite the small size of the sample used for Table One, it is nonetheless clear that certain patterns can be seen to emerge. The absence of grammaticalized indefinite articles in all the ancient languages (Latin, New Testament Greek, Old Church Slavonic) and also from the non-Balkan Slavic languages — represented here by Russian and Serbian — is clearly illustrated by the absence of such forms from all the passages except MT 8:19, where the numeral ‘one’ is used in all the languages to mean ‘a certain’ or ‘one of the class of.’ On the other hand, the patterns in Romanian, Albanian, and Turkish are almost identical to English. The absence from MT 4:18 in Albanian and Turkish is due to different grammatical constraints that incorporate such objects into the verb either as definite objects (Albanian) or as unmarked accusatives (Turkish). The Romanian exception is the only example of a categorically generic indefinite article in our small corpus, and in Romanian, as in Modern Greek, such usage is avoided.

The future Indic (Romani) and Balkan Slavic examples provide interesting patterns that are mid-way between the utter absence of the ancient and non-Balkan Slavic languages and the full grammaticalization of English and the non-Slavic Balkan languages. Although Macedonian has an unambiguously grammaticalized indefinite marker, as indicated by the fact that it can trigger object reduplication in its specific meaning (cf. note four), it has a lower frequency of usage than in the Balkan languages — only four occurrences out of nine: All of them are animate and specific-identifying, and it is arguable that object quality in Mk 6:27 is different from that of Jn 9:1, i.e. the act of sending involves an effect of agent on patient, whereas in seeing it is the patient that can be said to affect the agent by being seen. All of the Bulgarian uses in our small sample are identifying, but Avgustinova (1998) has examples of generic-categorizing as well. The Romani examples seem to reflect that of the dominant language of the country in which the translation was published. Thus the Bulgarian Arli dialect patterns exactly like the Bulgarian version, whereas the Gurbet version (Dimić 1990) published in Novi Sad is almost identical to the Serbian in its usage, the identifying-specific usage of MT 8:5 being the only exception. Other Gurbet dialectal texts, however, indicate that jekh ‘one’ is also used in that and other Vlax dialects as a true indefinite article. (Matras 1996 provides numerous examples. See also Friedman Forthcoming.) We can therefore discount the data from Dimić (1990) as being unduly influenced by Serbian in the same way that the Modern Greek Gospels are overly influenced by New Testament Greek.

What then, are we to make of these data? Can it be argued that the indefinite article represents a Balkan phenomenon, or does the presence of such a grammatical category in languages of Western Europe and South Asia argue for a typological rather than an areal explanation? It is clearly the case that the ancestral languages of Balkan Slavic, Balkan Romance, Balkan Indic (Romani) and Greek did not possess indefinite articles. We cannot be sure of the ancestor of Albanian, but the possible existence of a definite article in the language of Lower Moesia (Hamp 1982) allows us at least to speculate upon the possibility that an indefinite article might also have been present. The evidence of Old Turkic (Tekin 1968:45) indicates that bir was already involved such usage at a time when its functional equivalents were not so employed in the Balkan languages.

Although Avgustinova (1998:15) refers to “striking typological parallels” in the use of indefinite articles in the various Balkan languages, Hamp’s (1977) distinction among areal, typological, and genetic linguistics — particularly between areal and typological in this instance — is crucial in understanding these phenomena in a broader context. That the developments are convergent is undeniable. Once a genetic explanation is ruled out by evidence, as is the case with indefinite articles in those Balkan languages for which we have older documentation — given the absence of such articles from Old Church Slavonic, Ancient Greek, and Latin — convergence in the absence of contact or multilingualism must be treated as typological, but not in the presence of such factors. Bulgarian and Macedonian show a significant difference in the treatment of indefiniteness from Common Slavic as represented by Old Church Slavonic, and they are closer to Balkan Romance, Greek, and Albanian (and also Turkish) than to the rest of the modern Slavic languages, represented here by Serbian/Croatian and Russian. I would argue that like the grammaticalization of definiteness, object reduplication, infinitive replacement, analytic comparative constructions, and others using a particle derived from an auxiliary meaning ‘want’ (= ‘will’), all of which are to be found in Western Europe, the rise of the indefinite article in the Balkan languages, including Bulgarian, took place during the period when those various languages were in contact with one another, and thus constitutes a Balkanism in this sense. As Topolínska (1995) observes: “Analytic markers of referentiality emerge in periods of convergent development, in conditions of creolization, while synthetic markers are instruments of linguistic divergence.” The fact that this development did not go as far in Balkan Slavic and Balkan Indic (Romani) as it did in the other Balkan languages (including here Turkish) may be due to the later impetus given to this development. We can also note here that Albanian, Romanian, Greek, and Turkish, all of which are commonly acknowledged to have grammaticalized indefinite articles, differ among themselves and from English with respect to their particular rules of usage (cf. note fifteen below).

The citation of the Balkan indefinite article, including that of Bulgarian, is in this respect comparable to that of Balkan infinitive replacement as analyzed by Joseph (1983). Joseph (1983:242–43) points out that although infinitive replacement is found in all the Balkan languages and may well constitute a Balkanism in the sense of a shared innovation due to contact, it is also the case that Albanian and Romanian have new or reinterpreted infinitival constructions, Bulgarian and Greek retain a few traces of old ones, and only Macedonian has completely eliminated the category. It should also be kept in mind that for Bulgarian in particular there is the additional normatively based discouragement of such usage (e.g. Brezinski 1968:48, see Friedman 1976 for other references, cf. also Friedman 1997) motivated both overtly by the perception that it imitates West European languages and perhaps covertly by the fact that such usage is different from the rest of Slavic and resembles the surrounding non-Slavic Balkan languages. It is certainly the case that colloquial usage is greater than literary usage.
In conclusion, I would still side with those who regard *edun* as an indefinite article in Bulgarian, albeit one with more restrictions and facultativities than in other Balkan or many West European languages. Moreover, I would argue that the Bulgarian indefinite article can be said to represent part of a heretofore unrecognized Balkan phenomenon, and the comparison with other Balkan languages in turn sheds additional light on the grammatical status of the phenomenon in Bulgarian.

NOTES

1. Inefinite loss and future formation were the other features. Regardless of the fact that in Greek (and Roman) the definite article is proposed, and that definiteness occurs in the Serbian/Croatian adjective and that postposed articles occur in Scandinavia and Euskara — and also North Russia — in the Balkан context the postposed definite article is a Balkanism. Cf. my comments below on areal versus typological criteria.

2. Thus, for example, at the Second International Congress of Bulgarian Studies, four papers dealt exclusively with this question (Stamenova 1987, Huse 1987, Gamova 1987, Minkov 1987) and many others addressed the issue, e.g. Jakova 1987, 423). A recent dissertation (Zakrova 1994) was devoted entirely to the subject. A brief complete survey of the literature is beyond the scope of this paper.

3. The question of the so-called indefinite article in Bulgarian is unresolved. The discussion here concerns "indefinites" such as *one/a, a certain/some—other, etc.* If we accept the presence of such an article of course, it cannot be "indefinite" insofar as there exist formally unmarked indefinite forms of the type *book — one must seek a different term for it, the category would become three-membered (book, book, the book), so that one cannot differentiate the formally unmarked article, nor can one declare a victory between it and the article marked with *one/a or a certain/some — or other.*

4. In our opinion, at this stage of the development of the Bulgarian language it is not logical to accept the presence of an indefinite article of the type *edun* *kniga*. Its place is in the periphery of the semantic functional field of the category. I should note in passing that the argumentation here is rather flawed, since *nekakoy sv* has a clear lexical specifying meaning, whereas *edun*, when used as an indefinite determiner is a meaningless (of its meaning of 'one'), i.e. it is grammaticalized (and can also be non-specific, cf. Avgustinova 1998). Thus, a comparison between the two lexical units is inappropriate. The presence of cliticization or absence-of stress (cf. Hauge 1977:98-99), while useful in arguing for grammaticalization, is not a requirement. Examples cited in newspaper articles, e.g. make it clear that *edun* certainly functions in that register of Bulgarian as an indefinite article. We should note that *nekakoy sv* triggers object realization as a marker of specificity (e.g. *Ja baram edna kniga 'I'm looking for a [particular] book' as opposed to *Ba ram minka 'I'm looking for a [any] book.') is a powerful argument for its grammaticalized status (cf. Friedman 1993, cf. also Naylor 1989/1990). Despite this clear evidence of grammaticalization, Macedonian *edun* is used less frequently as an indefinite article in our materials than *nekakoy sv*. In this regard, the following two passages from the Bulgarian original and Macedonian translation of Konstantinov's *Baj Gano* are illustrative:

Portirat’ sled vseki pet minuti udri zvzino i razdvojeno, s edin levni glas, sobstveno

Portirot, na sekoi pet minut, svoi i rodamudno, so mekosh glas, go soopitava

The porter would ring a bell every five minutes and calmly, with a lazy voice, announces the
directions of the threetransfers.

Te malko li ni skubit — otvori Baj Gano s edin ton, netvtrico varzhenie

The malki ne cubit! — otvori baj Gano co ton shto ne trpi nikahom privorstvo

As if they don’t cheat us! — answered Baj Gano with a tone that would break no contradiction.

The decision tose the Greek is dictated in part by the fact that both synchronically and
diachronically translations are available in a wide variety of languages. All translations were made from
the original languages except the Romansi, which were translated from Bulgarian (Mekotic 1995) and
Seriens (Dimic 1990).

The translation into Modern Greek followed New Testament usage too slavishly to be useful.
On the use of "one" as an indefinite article in Greek see Householder, Kassas, and Koutos (1964:96), who state: "The indefinite article is used more sparingly in Greek than in English; it is not used for example, with predicative nouns when not with indefinite direct objects, and generally not in proverbs and popular sayings when an entire class is meant and not a specific member of that class: *ekpoliosth"
APPENDIX OF BIBLICAL PASSAGES

English
Mk 6:27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought
Jn 9:1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth
Mt 4:8 Again, the Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain
4:13 he saw two brethren ... casting a net into the sea
2:And behold, there came a leper and worshipped him
5:There came unto him a centurion
8:9 For I am a man under authority
9:19 And a certain scribe came
2:24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea

Bulgarian
Mk 6:6:8 И тутак се проводи царят единъ сръдът, окохомъ заповядъ да донесатъ
главата му.

Jn 9:1 И като заминаваше вида единъ човекъ слепъ отъ рождениято.

Mt 4:8 Пакъ го заводи дяволятъ на единъ плашина много висока

4:18 видъ двайма братя ... че хвърляха мрежа въ морето

2:И ето, единъ прокаженъ доиде при него

5:единъ стотинъ доиде при него

8:9 и въ същия човекъ подъ властъ

9:19 И двойде единъ книжникъ.

2:4 И, ето, голяма буря се подигна на езерото

Macedonian
Mk 6:27 И веднаш, отхапа вспреки делот, царят

9:1 Кога одене видя еден слепъ човекъ отъ неговото разъзнание

4:8 Го видя гавилотъ потомъ на много висока

2:8 И етъ, се приближи еденъ лепрохъ ... нещо

5:5 се приближи до него еденъ стотинъ

9:9 и събъруха подъ властъ

19:9 Тогашъ се приближи до Исусъ единъ книжникъ.

2:8 И ето, настъпва голяма буря во морето.

Old Church Slavonic
Mk 6:27 И веднаш, отхапа вспреки делот, царят

9:1 Кога одене видя еден слепъ човекъ отъ неговото разъзнание

4:8 Го видя гавилотъ потомъ на много висока

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9:9 и събъруха подъ властъ

19:9 Тогашъ се приближи до Исусъ единъ книжникъ.

2:8 И ето, настъпва голяма буря во морето.

Greek
Mk 6:27 Και εκείνος ξυποκείταται ὁ Βασιλεὺς στρέμματος, ἐκτάσεως οἱ δύο ἐνεχύρωσεν

9:1 Και παρέβεβληκεν ἐνενεχύρωσεν τοῖς ἐνεχύρωσεν

4:8 Πάλαι εἰς τοῦ καντακύρουν ταπεινόν ἐκ

4:18 ἠμένοις δύο ἐφημερίας ... ἐμβαθυναται αὐτῶν εἰς τὴν ταλασσόνα

8:2 Καὶ ἤλθεν ἐπὶ τὸν εὐαγγέλων κηρεύοντος αὐτῷ
ИЗСЛЕДВАНЕТО НА КУЛТУРАТА НА МАЛКИЯ ГРАД — МОДЕЛ ЗА ИЗСЛЕДВАНЕ НА КУЛТУРАТА НА МАЛКИ ОБЩИНИ?

Мила Сантова

Ще се опита и съвсем накратко да систематизирам тук някои от резултатите на едно моепространственно изследване на върха на културата на малкия град Вевропейското културно пространство (Югоизточна — Северозападна Европа). Целта в случая е тази систематизация да ми послужи като база за разследване на въпроса, обаче въпроса още още доколко и как, накрая очертани модели могат да се отнасят до извъневропейските културни общности.

Тук, разбира се, веднага следва да направим две уговорки: първо — изследване на върха на културата на град, за което става дума, е базирано върху значимо количество емпиричен материал, събрани в резултат на личен теренен опит. Тъй като се съжалени няма възможности да възможностите на стратификация на различни слоеве: социална, професионална, етническа, конфессионална… Очевидно не е възможно всички тези едновременно да имам предвид тук. И тъй като конкретно “Новият свят” като който са адресирани паралелите в случая, като правило съществува едноманитно преди всичко във връзка с извън в забелязани наетични общности, което практиче значи — културни общности, основно към тях се адресират паралелите тук, без това да означава подчертане на останалите видове общности. Всичност тази “инвалидна” в някакъв смисъл продължава и до наши дни — например съвременните български интелектуални помнят много добре машино на “назначен” на малката балгарски интелектуален потенциал в Канада в началото на 90-те години. В наши дни в българските медиите се тираря рекла за облекчени условия на работен режим в някои южноамерикански страни, предполагащи условия за формиране на нови общества тези или "разширяване" на вече съществуващи. Тези процеси означават възможност в