After more than four decades of calls for a Balkan linguistic atlas, an international group of Balkanists is finally attempting to address the task on the basis of a pilot project begun at the University of St. Petersburg in 1996. This project, however, pursues the more modest goal of producing an atlas that will cover selected, representative dialects in depth, rather than attempting the herculean task of surveying all the dialects of all the languages of the region. Moreover, since the focus of the project is precisely area, it examines the dialects in terms of those categories that are of greatest relevance to language contact: syntax and lexicon. The current volume is the second in a series that is projected to cover 13 points (seven Slavic, three Greek, two Albanian and one Romance), of which the first was the Bulgarian dialect of Sminka Lika (and near-by villages) in the Rhodopes (Smolyan region).

The volume under review here comprises an introduction (pp. 17-28), syntax (29-252), lexicon (253-389), ethno-linguistics (390-485) and texts (486-513). The bibliography consists of seventeen items, and there is a 74-minute CD of 29 tracks: seventeen tracks from the ethno-linguistics section narrated by eight speakers, and twelve tracks from the texts, ten from one speaker and one each from two others, all of whom were also recorded for the ethno-linguistics tracks.

The introduction gives some details about Lesnja, which is a Bekashi village in the Çanovska district and thus representative of northern Tosk, itself the dialectal base of Standard Albanian. The location of the village is described in detail, but no map is provided. Although Jorgo Gjiniari published a twenty-page dialectological description of the Skrapar region in 1960, the dialect of Lesnja has not been described before, and no Albanian dialect has received such a detailed syntactic and lexical description. In a sense, as indicated by the title, this volume is the

\emph{Balkanistica} 16 (2003)
Comparative Syntax of Balkan Languages

Maria Luisa Rivero and Angela Ralli (eds)


Reviewed by Virginia Hill
University of New Brunswick

This volume contains a collection of papers in generative grammar presented at the workshop on the syntax of Balkan languages in Athens, 1996. Topics include identifying functional categories, the pattern of verb movement, accounts on raising and control, clitic doubling, the morphosyntax of subjunctives and the structure of DP. Languages under discussion (i.e., Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian) are presented in comparative paradigms with other languages and dialects of the Balkans as well as languages outside this area.

Brian Joseph’s paper raises the question “Is Balkan Comparative Syntax Possible?” and his comments set the tone for the other studies in the volume. Basically, a distinction is drawn between the study of Sprachbund properties of the Balkan languages and the study of the parametric settings in these languages. Sprachbund properties sprang from language contact, which entails superficially shared features, without profound consequences on the grammar of each language concerned. His example of the formation of past tense in Albanian and Macedonian shows borrowing through language contact; however, this form does not carry over the formation of other tenses in each language. Recognition of language-contact effects transpires when the respective features diverge from the inherited Proto-Indo-European properties. Thus, a historical approach is indispensable when identifying Sprachbund properties: not only is there need to distinguish between inheritance and borrowing, but also the synchronic contemporary data must be seen with an eye to the 400 to 700 years of language development since the contact situation (i.e., the Balkanization) has occurred. In this context, the differences among Balkan languages are as important as the similarities, since they define each other. This type of linguistic study, when

Balkanistica 16 (2003)