

# **Whose Literature? Aspects of Banat Bulgarian Literature in Serbia<sup>1</sup>**

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## **1. Introduction**

In the last 20 years, two political changes spread across Eastern Europe and the Balkans, i.e., the fall of Communism and the expansion of the European Union (EU), causing significant changes in minority issues. Ethnic groups that had not been officially recognized in the old political system started demanding official recognition by the state in which they were living. This movement can be closely related to the politics of the EU regarding multiculturalism, and multilingualism—one of the more important values. Once an ethnic group achieves official recognition after struggling for minority rights, often its effect will resonate with other groups: the effect may travel from one ethnic group to another living under the same or similar political circumstances; alternatively, it may travel from one ethnic group to another of the same ethnicity, but one living under a different political system.

Considering Slavic ethnic groups, a first example of movement involves the Silesians. Their regional activism has had a deeply rooted history, but the recent achievements of the Kashubs in both political

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and cultural fields strongly influenced Silesian regional activism today, which had been virtually impossible under Communism.

The second example of movement involves the Banat Bulgarians. The Banat region was divided between present-day Romania and Serbia after World War I, as a result of the Trianon Treaty (1920). In Romania Banat Bulgarian activism arose immediately following the elimination of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime in 1989, triggering a cultural revival of the Banat Bulgarians in Serbia in the 21st century.

In both cases, together with religion that has revived in the new political system, language is often one of the key elements in a cultural movement. Language is very often functions as a marker of ethnic/national identity that differentiates one ethnic group from another. Consequentially, literature written in a particular language (or dialect) can also be a strong marker of identity in order to prove the quality of the language itself. Thus, it is not surprising that in the aforementioned examples, these ethnic groups often concentrate their efforts on developing literature and publishing activity—as is well-illustrated by Grzegorz Schramke concerning Kashubian regional activism (in this volume).

For Banat Bulgarians, the development of literature was important as the expression of their identity. This can be observed particularly in the Interbellum period of the 1930s, and also today, but exclusively in the Romanian Banat. To the best of my knowledge, Banat Bulgarian literature in the Serbian Banat has never been analysed from this point of view. Taking these facts into consideration, I will characterize the role literature has played for the Banat Bulgarians in Serbia in their possible cultural revival.

## **2. Who Are Banat Bulgarians? Historical Background**

Banat Bulgarians are Roman Catholic South Slavs who immigrated from present-day Bulgaria between the 17th and 18th centuries. There were several waves of immigrants from different regions of Bulgaria: one group consisting of immigrants from the north western region, which began immigrating to present-day Romania after the Čiprovci Uprising (1688). They finally settled in the commune of Vinga in the Banat in 1741. Other immigrants came to this region from the north central re-

gion of Bulgaria, and they settled in Stár Bišnov (Dudeștii Vechi in Romanian) in the Banat in 1738. Thus, in the first stage of immigration, there were two different groups speaking different Bulgarian dialects; however, over time, their dialectal differences diminished, though the differences do exist even today.<sup>2</sup>

During the 19th century, some Bulgarian of Stár Bišnov, primarily peasants, began moving to other regions of the Banat in order to find a better life. The peasants settled in several villages in the Western Banat: present-day Jaša Tomić, Konak, Stari-Lec, Belo Blato, Skorenovac, Ivanovo, and others.<sup>3</sup> The migration route varies; there were waves coming directly from Stár Bišnov, but some settlers moved from one Serbian village to another (see Map). Among these villages, Ivanovo (municipality of Pančevo) is the largest and today functions as a cultural centre for Serbian Banat Bulgarians.

The exact number of Banat Bulgarians in Serbia is hard to determine. According to local historian Augustin Kalapiš,<sup>4</sup> there are 254 Banat Bulgarians in Ivanovo, which is characterized as a multiethnic village where Hungarians are a majority, with Serbian settlers living scattered among them.<sup>5</sup> The total number of Banat Bulgarians in Serbia may be about 1,000.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, there are some Banat Bulgarians who returned to Bulgaria, or moved to Western Europe or the United States, whose number is unclear. In any case, all these Banat Bulgarians are the potential and main readers of Banat Bulgarian literature, but since the

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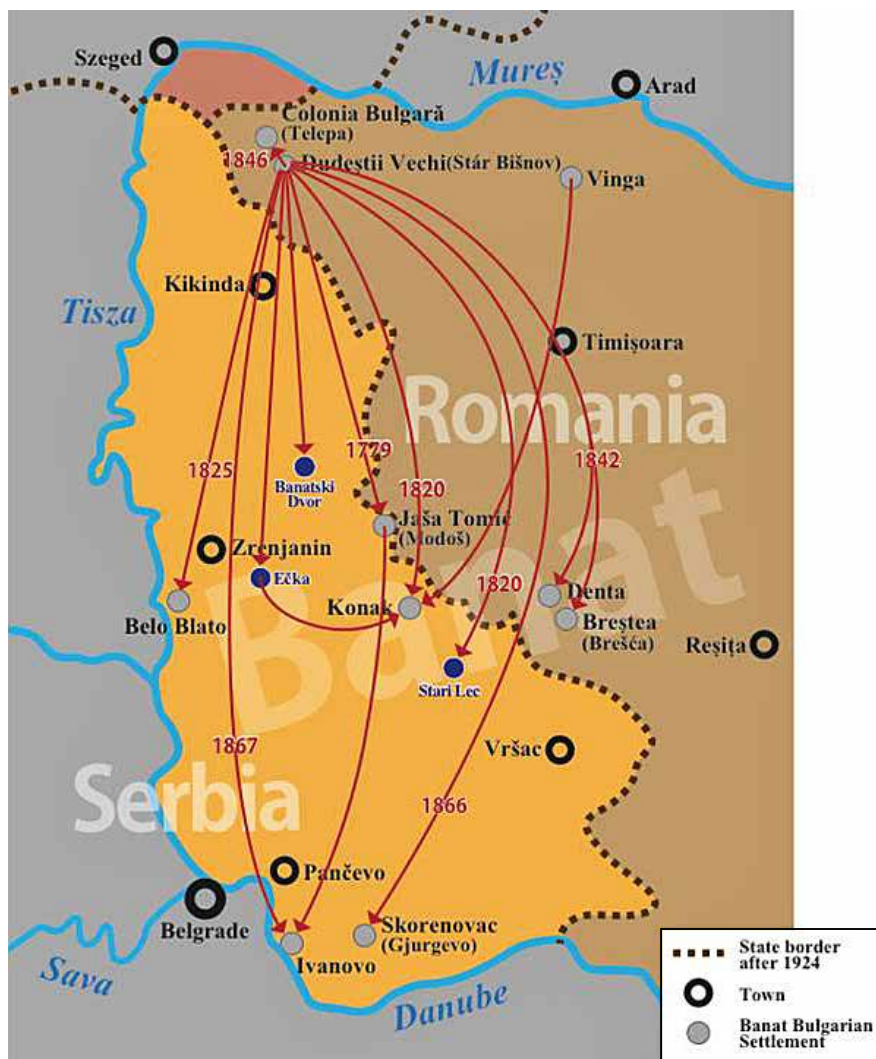
2 S. Stojkov, *Banatskijat govor* (Sofija: Bălgarskata akademija na naukite, 1967), pp. 23–26.

3 K. Telbizov and M. Vekova-Telbizova, *Tradicionen bit i kultura na banatskite bălgari* (Sofija: Izdatelstvo na bălgarskata akademija na naukite, 1963), pp. 21–22.

4 A. Kálápiš, *145 godina od doseljavanja banatskih Bugara-Palčena u Ivanovo* (Temišvár: Mirton, 2014), p. 111.

5 S. Čurčić and M. Jovanović, *Atlas naselja Vojvodine: Banat* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2014).

6 According to the 2002 Census, there are approximately 6,500 Banat Bulgarians in Romania. M. Márkov, *Bišnova preku vremeto* (Timišvár: Mirton, 2013), p. 11.



Map: Main Immigration Routes of Banat Bulgarians according to Telbis (1938) and Telbizov and Vekova-Telbizova (1963)

language has not always been successfully transmitted from one generation to another, today there are Banat Bulgarians who do not understand the language well.

### **3. Literary Tradition among Banat Bulgarians in Serbia: Before Communism**

A striking feature of Banat Bulgarian culture is their literary tradition going back to the mid-19th century, thanks to local priest and teacher Jozu Rill, who published *Bălgârskutu právupísanji* ‘The Bulgarian Orthography’ in 1866. This publication can be considered the first codification of the Banat Bulgarian literary language. Throughout history, this orthographic system has been modified and simplified; nonetheless, the language had an official norm, which was widespread and taught in all major villages where Banat Bulgarians settled.

Thanks to the activity of Banat Bulgarian priests and teachers, particularly Rill’s successor, Leopold Kossilkov, they started publishing not only religious books, but also secular publications, including practical books and periodicals.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it comes as no surprise that these new media triggered literary development in newly-codified Banat Bulgarian. These activities flourished presumably in Vinga and Stár Bišnov, cultural centres for Banat Bulgarians. In contrast, there was no publishing activity in Banat Bulgarian in the Western (present-day Serbian) Banat where they did not have any cultural centre, comparable to those in Vinga or Stár Bišnov. This can be explained by the fact that the Banat Bulgarians in the Serbian Banat were mostly peasants or gardeners, far removed from literary activity.

As a result of the assimilation policy introduced by the Kingdom of Hungary, Banat Bulgarian literature declined, and literary activity was almost completely suspended until the end of the 1920s with a few exceptions. It was in the Interbellum period of the 1930s when the ‘renaissance’ of the Banat Bulgarian literary language appeared, thanks to efforts made by Karol Telbis (later Telbizov), Anton Levanov, and his

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<sup>7</sup> Stojkov, *Banatskijat govor*, pp. 18–21.

colleagues. This period differed from that of Leopold Kossilkov; secular original literature developed rapidly, and for that the development of periodicals also played a significant role, as observed by Márkov.<sup>8</sup> Literary works were published in such periodicals as *Banátsći balgarsći glásnić* ‘The Banat Bulgarian Herald,’ and *Banátsći balgarsći kalendár* ‘The Banat Bulgarian Calendar.’ Circulation of these publications numbered around 1,000–2,000<sup>9</sup> and these periodicals were distributed in the Serbian Banat as well.<sup>10</sup> Most of the writers were from Romanian Banat, but two Banat Bulgarians from Modoš (present-day Jaša Tomić),<sup>11</sup> a town in the Serbian Banat, joined the renaissance and published their works in the aforementioned periodicals. Matija Bánčov, a productive writer, and Georgi Damjanov,<sup>12</sup> a patriotic poet, were both teachers in the Serbian Banat.<sup>13</sup> Between the two, Bánčov was the first novelist and, according to Márkov,<sup>14</sup> one of the most talented Banat Bulgarian writers at the time.

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8 M. Márkov, *Antologija na banátskata balgarska literatura*. tom I (Timišvár: Mírton, 2013), p. vi.

9 Nikolae Dascălu, ‘Un modèle d’évolution de la presse en Roumanie pendant l’entre-deux-guerres: les périodiques du Banat, 1919–1939,’ *Revue roumaine d’histoire* XXVI, 1–2 (1987), pp. 28–29. See also Márkov, *Antologija*, p. xxii.

10 This fact is confirmed by Georgi Damjanov himself. See M. Mladenov, ‘Banatskite bălgari, 250 godini,’ *Most* 117 (1989), p. 82.

11 According to Telbizov and Vekova-Telbizova (1963: 21), Banat Bulgarians from Modoš were intellectual and they knew, in addition to their mother tongue, German, Serbian, Hungarian, and sometimes Romanian. Ultimately, this multilingualism led them to heterogamy, and, as a result, they were considered assimilated.

12 K. Telbis, *200 gudini u Banata 1738–1938* (Timišoara: Banátsći balgarsći glásnić, 1938), pp. 113–117. See also K. Telbizov, ‘Bălgarskata regionalna xudožestvena literatura u Banat: kratăk istoričeski očerk,’ *Ezik i literatura* 79 (1979), pp. 60–70.

13 According to Kalapiš (2015: 68), Bánčov taught the standard Bulgarian language in Ivanovo, during the German occupation (1943/44–1945/46). See A. Kalapiš, *140 godina osnovne škole “Moša Pijade” u Ivanovu 1875–2015* (Ivanovo: udruženje banatskih Bugara “Ivanovo-Banat”, 2015).

14 Márkov, *Antologija*, p. xxiv.

Bánčov is known to have published 11 stories<sup>15</sup> and one novel between 1937–1940.<sup>16</sup> As for Damjanov, the number of his works is unknown.

Both Bánčov and Damjanov were proud of their origins, and faithful to their ancestry. This kind of ethnic consciousness did generally exist among their contemporary Banat Bulgarians, but, being far-removed from the cultural centres of Banat Bulgarians and ethnic minorities in the Serbian Banat where they witnessed the assimilation process, these two writers tended to express their Banat Bulgarian consciousness, which is one of the salient features of their works. Here is one of Damjanov's poems:<sup>17</sup>

***Balgarin sam***

Mojta majća mi'i kazala,  
Još durdi sam manen bil:  
„Balgarin si, dite muje,  
Tuj da si mi zapantil!”

***I am a Bulgarian***

My mother told me,  
when I was still a kid:  
‘You are a Bulgarian, my son,  
May you remember this!’

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15 They are as follows: *Ud stárata kniga* ‘From the Old Book,’ *Jésenska sutirna na planinata* ‘Autumn Dawn of the Mountain,’ *Mandalinka* ‘Mandalinka,’ *Dedu Bánču* ‘Granddad Bánčo,’ *Idna prikazka na žinite* ‘A Story of the Women,’ *Pastirče* ‘A Shepard Boy,’ *Ud na lojzi* ‘From a Vineyard,’ *Čiša, čiša hora* ‘Rain, Rain, folks,’ *Jábalkata* ‘The Apple,’ *Ud nášte običáje* ‘From Our Customs,’ *Nekolku običáje* ‘Some Customs.’ These works have been difficult to find, but now they are available in *Antologija na banátskata balgarska literatura* ‘Anthology of the Banat Bulgarian Literature’ edited by Miki Márkov (2010). One has to keep in mind that in the new edition of Banat Bulgarian literature Márkov adopted a slightly modified orthography from that which was originally used in 1930s, when the orthography was greatly simplified and did not reflect the real pronunciation. In addition, in the new edition there are many ‘corrections’ based on Márkov’s view and explanations that did not exist in the original such as *ájer* (*vazduh*) ‘air’ or *glásbenata* (*muzikálnata*), ‘music’ for present-day readers.

16 The title of the novel is *Lutanji* ‘Wandering.’ This is the one and only Banat Bulgarian novel of that time. According to Márkov (2010: XXIV), it was circulated among Banat Bulgarians in lithographic form. Unfortunately, it is not available today.

17 Taken from Telbizov (1979: 69). It was originally published in *Banátsći balgarsći kalendár* in 1937.

Menalu' i već mnogu vreme, Ud тази sladka hurta. Ama az se toz ustanavam, Toz za bada du smračta!'	Much time has already passed, since this pleasant conversation. But I am remaining this way, I will remain a Bulgarian until my death!
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The topics Bánčov covers vary, but in many cases, they are closely related with Banat Bulgarian-ness. For instance, in his story *Dedu Bánču* 'Grandad Bančo,' Matija Bánčov vividly describes the history of his ancestors and his surname *Bánčov*, in which his Bulgarian origin is emphasized. In doing this, the author tries to inspire other compatriots at the end of his story as follows:

Pu тази istenska prikazka ud náštu vleklo vidi se, či nášte udkole menatite predhodnici beja još gulem rod: rojeni brájće! Ama sled tolkus menati gudini nija se više ni puznávami katu takvizi, a tuj pudpalnu ij razumenu gá imami u vidnust nášte taj uskadnite, stárite kulturni izure! Daklem, drágji brájće, spumeneti si i za náša stárija dedu Bánču, čija krav, misla, ja useštemi kaće mu zagreva sarcito u nekuja prelegji.<sup>18</sup>

As Márkov has pointed out,<sup>19</sup> one can find a certain number of lexical borrowings from Serbian. In addition, there were obvious grammatical features modelled after Serbian that were foreign to the Banat Bulgarian language in Romania. These are natural consequences of sociolinguistic changes in this area caused by the creation of political borders because in these two different political entities, language policy and the official language were different. Nevertheless, without hesitation one can say that Bánčov followed the tradition of Banat Bulgarian literature and even developed it.<sup>20</sup>

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18 This fragment is taken from Márkov (2010: 160). Translation is as follows: According to this true story about our origin, one can tell that our now-long-gone ancestors were a large tribe: My dear Brothers! However, we are not known as such a large tribe any longer after so many years have gone by. Nevertheless, this is absolutely clear when we consider the fact that we have our, indeed—scarce, ancient cultural records! My dear brothers, remember, therefore, our old grandpa Bančo whose blood, I think, we can feel warms our hearts in every story.

19 Márkov, *Antologija*, pp. xxv–xxvi.

20 As one such feature, one can mention the use of the aorist and imperfect tense, which no longer exist in the spoken language. This feature is observed throughout the Banat Bulgarian literature.



The literary renaissance came to an end at the middle of the 1940s, when Romania fell under a Communist regime. During this period, Banat Bulgarians practically lost any possibility of publishing works in their mother tongue.<sup>21</sup> This was not only an enormous blow for Banat Bulgarian literature in Romania, but a critical blow for Banat Bulgarians in Serbia as well, because they lacked any media of their own in the Banat Bulgarian language. Additionally, in the 1930s, use of Banat Bulgarian as a written language began to dwindle, as the Yugoslavian authority of that time did not recognize the Bulgarian minority.

During this time, Telbis reported<sup>22</sup> on the decline of Banat Bulgarian as a literary language in the Serbian in the Serbian Banat, and it ceased its function in the 1930s when it disappeared from the churches, due to a lack of priests fluent in the language. There were some cases in which the Banat Bulgarian language was already forgotten by that time.<sup>23</sup> This was caused, to some extent, by natural assimilation with the local majorities, especially Hungarians, with whom Banat Bulgarians shared a religion and other cultural tradition. Hungarian-Banat Bulgarian bilingualism became more prevalent, diminishing the status of Banat Bulgarian and turning it into a vernacular with no written variety. Later, most Banat Bulgarians in the Serbian Banat would become trilingual, leading to another assimilation with the Serbs, with whose language Banat Bulgarian shares many South Slavic features.<sup>24</sup>

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21 However, it does not mean that Banat Bulgarians lost their literary language. According to Miki Márkov (personal communication), Banat Bulgarian was taught in churches even during the Communist period in Romania. It is interesting to note that in this period a collection of Banat Bulgarian poems entitled *Antologija na balgarskata poezija ud Banáta* 'Anthology of the Bulgarian Poetry from the Banat' was published in Déta. Márkov (personal communication) estimates that the circulation numbers of this publication was about 30–60. Obviously, this publication was not circulated in the Serbian Banat.

22 See Telbis, *200 gudini u Banata*, pp. 67–85.

23 See Telbis *200 gudini u Banata*, p.67.

24 One has to pay attention to the fact that in Catholic churches in the Banat region, Croatian has also been used, in addition to Hungarian. Needless to say, the standard Croatian and Serbian are very similar, and for Banat Bulgarians they are practically the same language, which could be a remote cause of their assimilation with Serbs.

#### 4. Revival or New Phenomenon? Banat Bulgarian Literature in Present-Day Serbia

During the Communist period, Banat Bulgarians in Serbia did not have their literature in a written form. The revival of Banat Bulgarian culture began after the fall of Communism in Yugoslavia, particularly in the 21st century. There are a few reasons and a couple of different origins that motivated this revival; first, the revival among Banat Bulgarians in Romania that started immediately after the Revolution of 1989: they recommenced their publishing activity, which meant the second revival of Banat Bulgarian literature after the 1940s. Over time, Banat Bulgarians on both sides of the border re-established communication. Contextually, the aforementioned Augustin Kalapiš and the mayor of Ivanovo Josif Vasilčin-Mare played an important role. Thanks to the latter, Banat Bulgarian publications produced in Romania such secular periodicals as *Náša glás* 'Our Voice,' *Literaturna miselj* 'Literary Thought' as well as a religious newspaper *Isusvata svetlús* 'Jesus's Light,' and many other publications, including prayer books and the translation of the New Testament, started to circulate in the Serbian Banat. In 2007, Vasilčin-Mare launched a multilingual local newspaper *Ivanovački Dobošar* 'Ivanovo Drummer'<sup>25</sup> in which several authors, but mainly Kalapiš, printed articles in Banat Bulgarian. These activities seemed to bring about a desire for writing in Banat Bulgarians in Serbia. A collection of poems written by local poet Magdalena Vasilčin-Doža, titled *Ako mene još ima/Ak méne još ima* 'If there is still me,' came out as the first book ever published by a Banat Bulgarian in Serbia (2008).

Vasilčin-Doža is an alumna of the University of Belgrade, where she studied South Slavic philology. She is Banat Bulgarian according to tradition, just as her father is Banat Bulgarian. Her mother is Hungarian; one might say that Vasilčin-Doža is a 'regular' Banat Bulgarian in the Serbian Banat regarding her origins, as mixed marriages are very usual there. Her book is bilingual as one can see in the title, both in Serbian and Banat Bulgarian, but the original poems were written in Serbian and translated into Banat Bulgarian by Augustin Kalapiš.

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25 I.e. town crier.

For Vasilčin-Doža, Banat Bulgarian is the dearest language, being the language of her father and her childhood. The second is Hungarian, her mother's language. In her everyday life, however, the order is different—Serbian is Vasilčin-Doža's first language, and Hungarian the next. Banat Bulgarian is the third, and least important, in a practical sense.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, in order to express her poetic feeling, Vasilčin-Doža chose Serbian, with which she is the most familiar as the best device to express herself. Being of Banat Bulgarian descent, Vasilčin-Doža also wanted to publish her work in which has a special emblematic function for her.

As in most cases with Banat Bulgarians in Serbia, Vasilčin-Doža did not have experience writing in Banat Bulgarian; for her, it was very difficult to master the writing. In order to better understand and remember the language, she attended a Banat Bulgarian language workshop organized by Pančevo-based NGO *In Medias Res*, in which Augustin Kalapiš functioned as an instructor since 2009.<sup>27</sup>

Vasilčin-Doža published her second collection of poems in 2010 under the title(s) *Upuznavanj sas stvárnust/Spoznaja stvarnosti/A valóság megismerése* 'Cognition of Reality.' The collection was translated into Banat Bulgarian by Augustin Kalapiš, the Hungarian version by Vasilčin-Doža herself, and edited by her colleagues.

There is not a single motive in Vasilčin-Doža's collected works relating to her Banat Bulgarian consciousness, though she is proud of her Banat Bulgarian origins. Instead, her poems are characterized by uncertainly searching for herself throughout her poems:

***Spoznaja stvarnosti***<sup>28</sup>

Ne znam, gde mi je mesto,  
među snovima,  
među bajkama,  
među zvezdama.

***Cognition of Reality***

I do not know where is my place,  
among dreams,  
among tales,  
among stars.

<sup>26</sup> According to the interview conducted by the author of this article in 2013, in Ivanovo.

<sup>27</sup> According to the interview conducted by the author of this article in 2013, in Ivanovo. This workshop ceased to exist in 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Magdalena Vasilčin-Doža, *Upuznavanj sas stvárnust/Spoznaja stvarnosti/A valóság megismerése* (Pančevo: SZR štamparija, 2010), p.5.

Ne znam, gde mi je mesto,  
među pticama,  
među drvećem,  
među ljudima.  
Ne znam, gde mi je mesto,  
na pitanje ovo, prosto,  
odgovor uzalud tražim,  
i lutam, od snova do zvezda,  
od leta do lišća,  
od čoveka do čoveka.

I do not know where is my place,  
among birds,  
among trees,  
among people.  
I do not know where is my place,  
to this simple question,  
I have been looking for the answer in vain,  
and wandering, from dreams to stars,  
from summer to leaves,  
from one person to another.

The difficulty of defining herself is a general topic of her poems, which contrasts with the literary works of Bánčov or Damjanov.

According to Vasilčin-Doža, she is a ‘child of Vojvodina;’<sup>29</sup> one can paraphrase this expression as ‘a child of multilingual and multicultural society where she grew up.’ This expression implies that she does not belong to only one ethnicity, although she chooses Banat Bulgarian without hesitation when necessary, as a tradition of her milieu. This notion is expressed in the second volume of her poems, published in three languages that are closely related to the life of the poet.

In this context, it is worth noticing that most contemporary Banat Bulgarians in Serbia do not always have sympathy toward orthodox Bulgarians in Bulgaria. The standard Bulgarian language is not easy to understand, and for them, Serbian is far more familiar and, in most cases, their native language, which is not the case with Banat Bulgarians in Romania. Banat Bulgarians in Romania, in contrast, have been closely related to the kin-state and, as a result, the Banat Bulgarian ethnic identity as a part of Bulgarian-ness is well preserved, and they still keep the memories of their history and their ancestors’ immigration from Bulgaria. For Banat Bulgarians in Serbia, Hungarians are familiar as their closest neighbours and, in many cases Banat Bulgarians are also speakers of Hungarian because of the close contact. Banat Bulgarians in Serbia often

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29 According to her book, *za sebe voli da kaže da je dete Vojvodine. Životni moto joj je poštovanje, ljubav i tolerancija*. ‘(She)...likes to talk about herself as a child of Vojvodina. Her life motto is respect, love and tolerance.’ This is taken from the back cover of her first book published in 2008.

have Hungarian blood too, as is the case with Magdalena Vasilčin-Doža. This situation is completely different from that in Romania where Hungarian element is scarcely present any more.

The question ‘To what literature do her poems belong?’ does not mean much for the poet, and it is difficult to treat the phenomenon of Magdalena Vasilčin-Doža as a mere revival of Banat Bulgarian literature from the 1930s: in her style, the content of her poems, and the very nature of her works. Rather, it would be correct to treat her literature as a kind of areal literature that cannot always be defined as national literature, or that of a certain ethnic group. In Vasilčin-Doža’s case, it would be a sort of ‘Vojvodina literature,’ or, to be more accurate, ‘Serbian Banat multicultural microareal literature.’

It goes without saying that in this sense, Banat Bulgarian literature in Romania differs in nature from that of their compatriots.<sup>30</sup> The same can be said regarding the Hungarian and Serbian parts of Vasilčin-Doža’s poems; none of them could be treated simply as a part of Hungarian or Serbian literature, just because of the author’s ethnicity and the original language(s) used in the literary works.

At this point, however, it may be difficult to call Vasilčin-Doža’s works an example of fully established areal literature. To the best of my knowledge, there is no other literary work published in Banat Bulgarian and/or other languages of the Banat region in the Serbian Banat. However, this fact does not deny the possibility of such micro-areal literature being further developed in this vein by Magdalena Vasilčin-Doža, and consisting partly of macro areal literature such as that of Central Europe, as analysed by Olga Tokarczuk (in this volume).

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30 There were various reactions on Vasilčin-Doža’s poems in the Romanian Banat: Is it really the first book published in Banat Bulgarian in Serbia? It seems to me that the language (Banat Bulgarian) is suffering from the translator... To be honest, if it were not for the Serbian version, I would not understand anything, either from the Introduction nor the poems themselves. I like the dialectal words such as *jal* ‘or,’ *hola* ‘like.’ See <http://www.starbisnov.blogspot.jp/2008/07/282.html> [accessed 15/7/2015].

## 5. (Tentative) Conclusion

In this article, I gave a brief analysis and characterization of literature written by three Banat Bulgarians in the Serbian Banat from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Since the material for analysis is quite limited, one cannot make a categorical conclusion. However, from what I have shown, it seems clear that the division of national borders had a significant influence on Banat Bulgarians' identity in totally different cultural milieu, which ultimately changed not only the motives of literature, but also the type of literature. Therefore, it is difficult to find a continuation of Banat Bulgarian literature in Serbia. To rephrase, as a result of the multicultural, multilingual situation in the Serbian Banat, Vasilčin-Doža seems to go beyond the traditional literature of a single ethnic or national group, and create microareal literature by using several languages that are closely connected to writers. Microareal literature was not possible in the 1930s, when the single Banat Bulgarian consciousness was strongly prevalent and necessary to preserving their identity, which is clearly reflected in their literary works of the 1930s. Returning to the question raised in the title of this article 'Whose literature;' at this moment, one could say that Banat Bulgarian literature in Serbia changed 'owners': from literature exclusively for Banat Bulgarians, to literature open to all those inhabiting the same milieu, beyond ethnic and linguistic borders.