

Towards an understanding of balanced bilingualism *à la balkanique*: the Montenegrin Velja Gorana and beyond

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Typology of small-scale multilingualism

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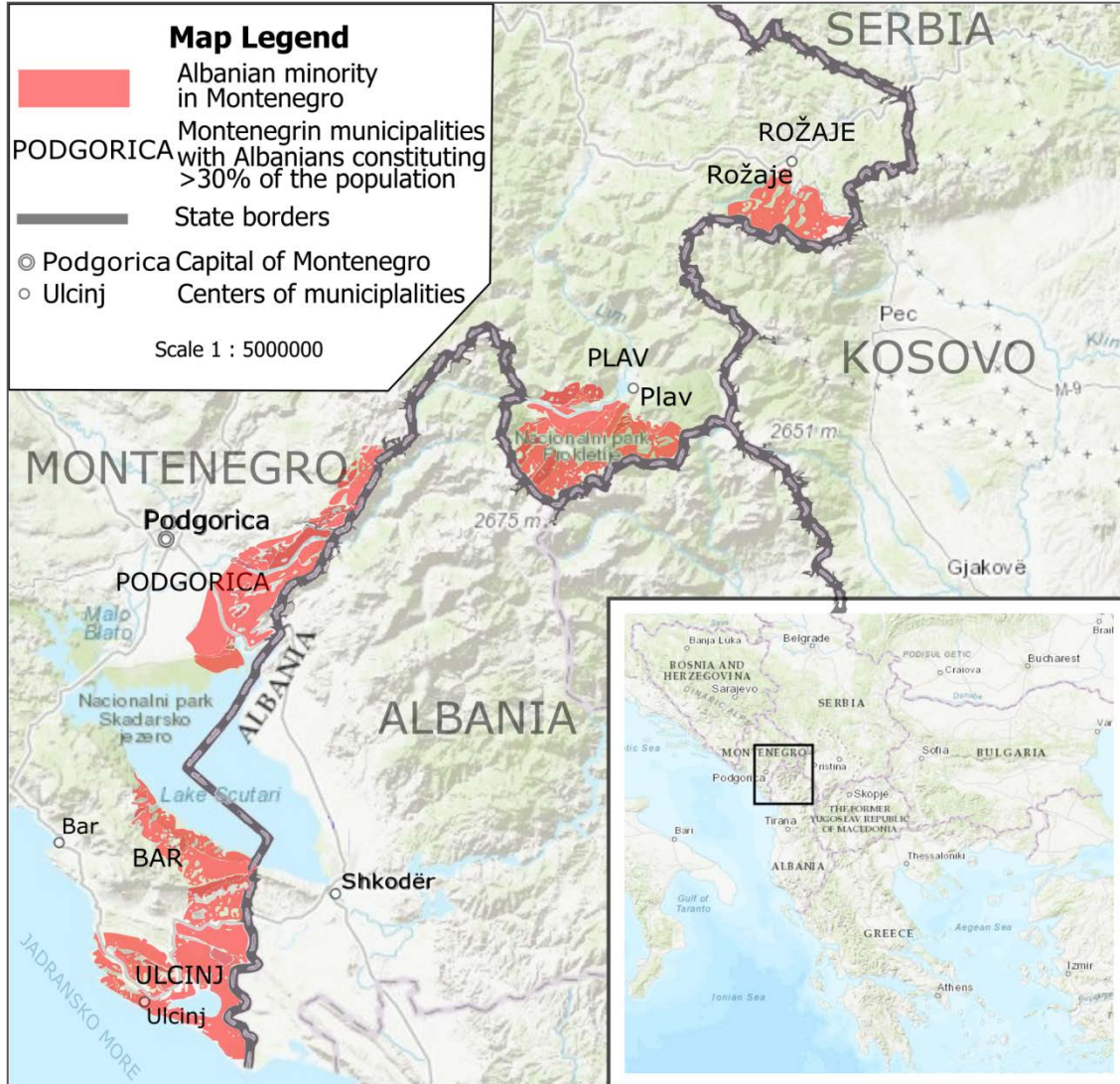
Preliminary remarks

- “Small-scale multilingualism is attested mainly in areas not or relatively recently exposed to Western settlements and Western ideas of nation states and standard language ideologies” (Lüpke 2016: 41).
- “The multilingual settings of the Old World <...> gave rise to a prominent model of bilingualism based on hierarchical relationships holding between languages and functional differentiations for them” (Idem).

The goals of the study

- To investigate a case of a small bilingual community in the Balkans and consider it in the context of the recent findings about the small-scale multilingualism (*balanced multilingualism* in Aikhenvald 2007), in order to find out if multilingual situations of this type occur in the modern European settings.
- To try to determine the role of such situations in the history of language contact in the Balkans.

Languages, ethnicities, and religions in the Albanian-Montenegrin border



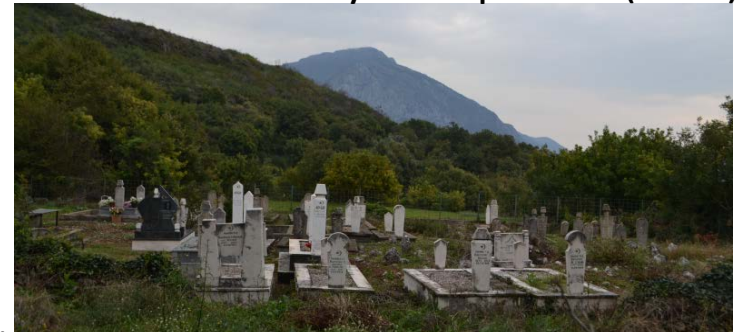
Orthodox church in Dobra Voda (Mne)



Catholic church in Klezna (Alb)



Muslim cemetery in Dapčevići (Mne)



April 23, 2019

Towards an understanding of balanced bilingualism à la balkanique...

Pleme Mrkovići in the southern Montenegro



View of the “Mrkovići field” and the Lake Skadar



An old house in the village Lunje



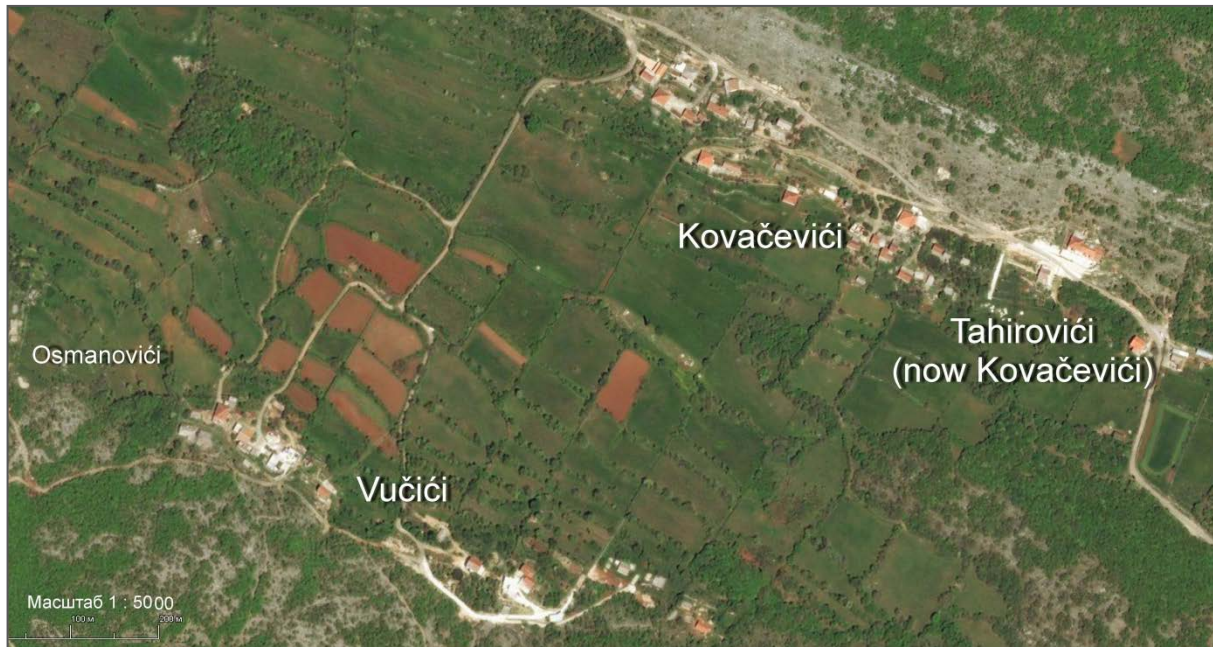
Mixed marriages and bilingualism in the Mrkovići and Velja Gorana

- The villages in the east of the Mrkovići area, Velja Gorana among them, are bilingual, mainly due to their tradition of intermarriages with Albanians.
 - The population of Pelinkovići, Vukići, Klezna, **and partly of Gorana**, acquired Albanian, because they used to marry women from the villages of Ana e Malit (Jovićević 1922: 113).
 - Bilingualism was not widespread in the Mrkovići, but the inhabitants of the bordering villages of the area, such as Međureč, Ljeskovac, Vukići, and **the lower part of Gorana**, use Albanian in communication (Vujović 1965: 20).

Data collection

- The research is based on fieldwork Maria Morozova did at the Velja Gorana community in 2012-2015 (sometimes together with the other participants of the field trip, Alexandra Dugushina and Andrey Sobolev).
- The sociolinguistic work combined self-report data such as interviews about the family genealogies, linguistic repertoires, and linguistic biographies, with participant observation and recording of naturalistic interactions.

Languages and identities in Velja Gorana

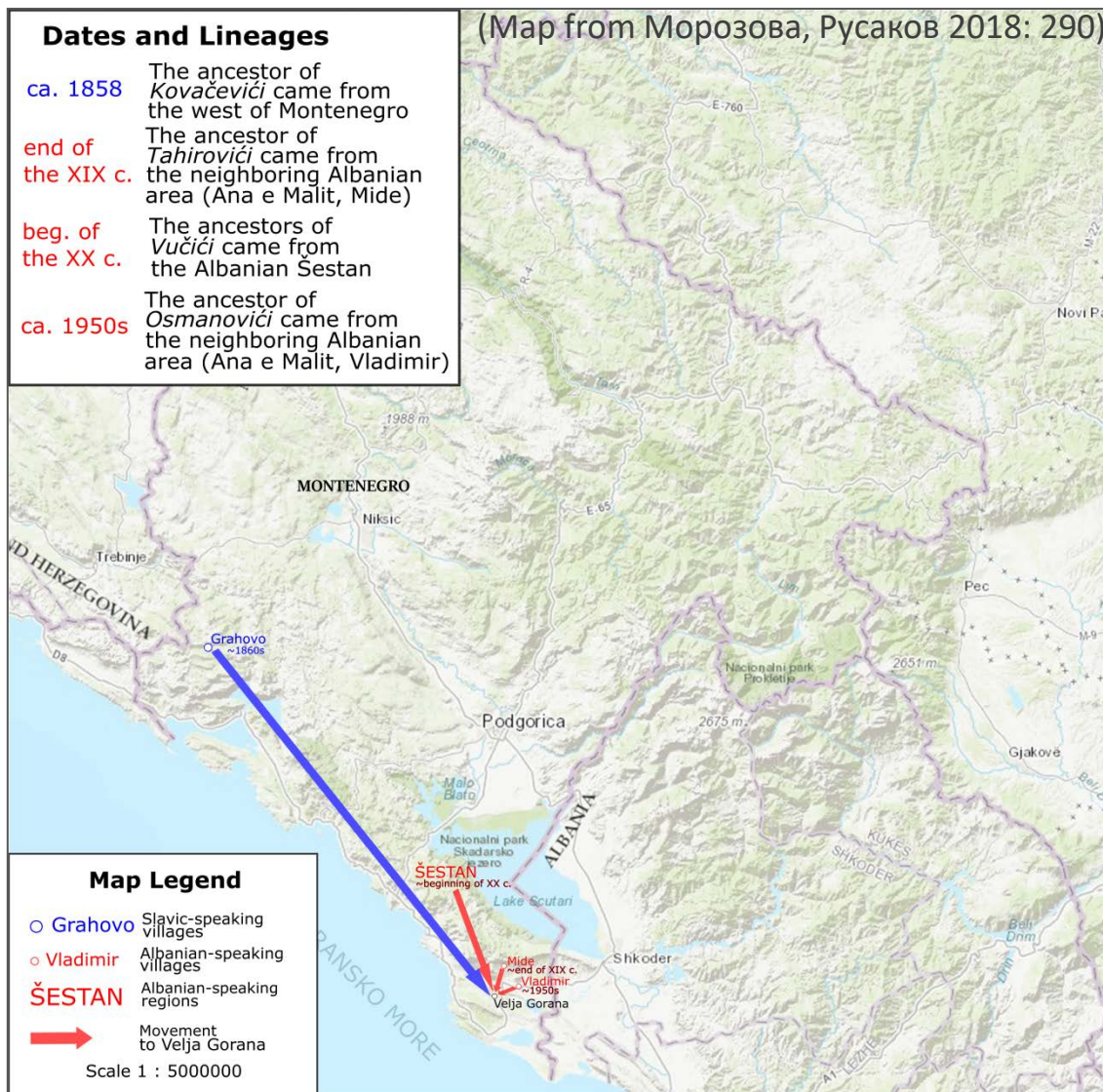


Montenegrin Census 2011:

Ethnicity	Number
Montenegrin	33
<i>Muslimani</i> 'Muslims'	285
Albanian	17
Not declared	18
	353

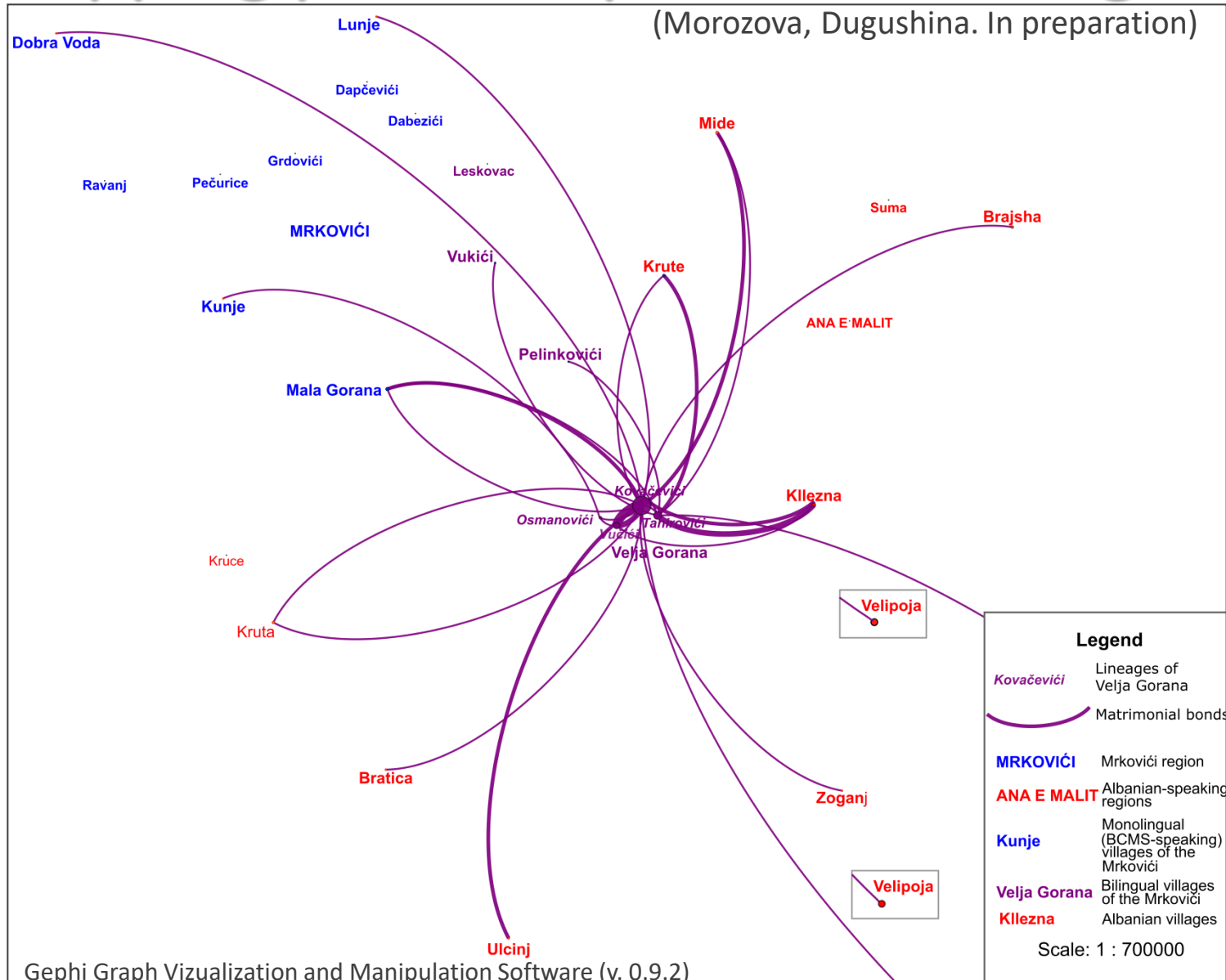
- Languages spoken – Montenegrin, Albanian
- Self-identification of the natives – *goranac*, *goranka* 'inhabitant of Gorana' (not Mrkovići, but NOT Albanians); Montenegrins, *Muslimani* 'Muslims' etc.
- Lineages – Kovačevići, Tahirovići (now Kovačevići), Vučići, Osmanovići

Foundation and population of Velja Gorana

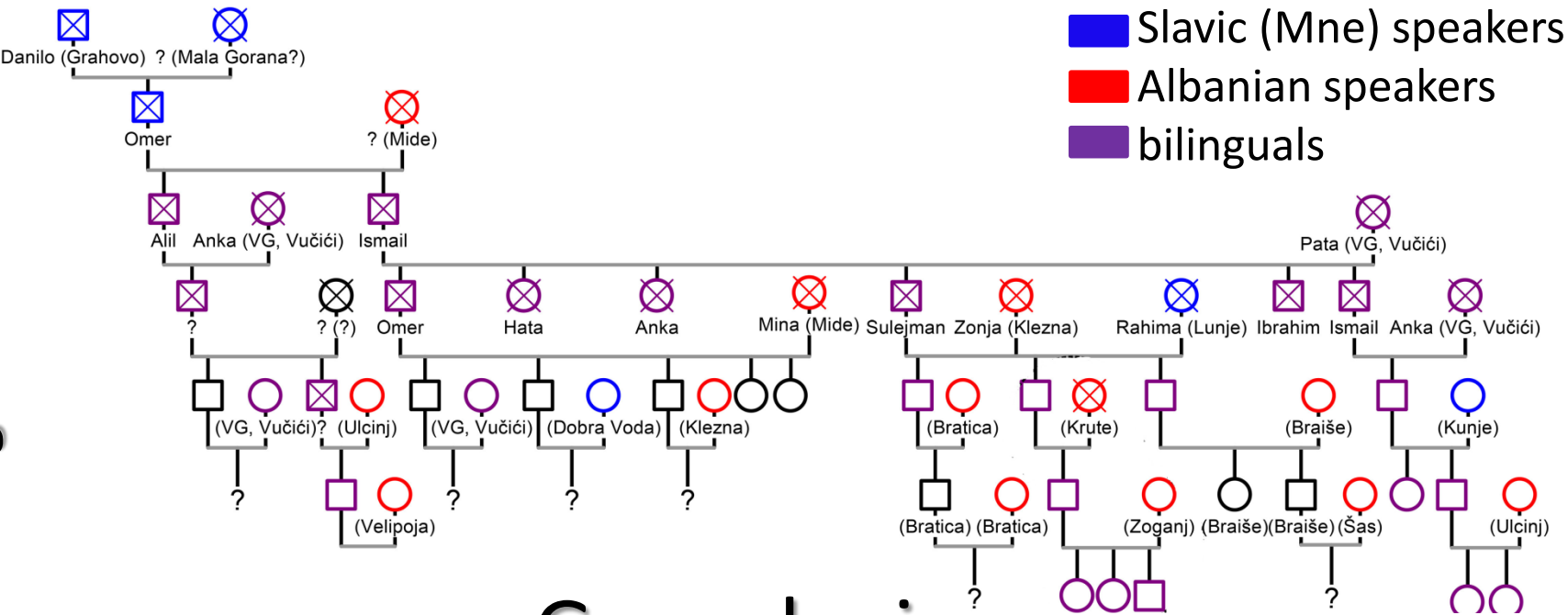


Mapping past and present marriages

(Morozova, Dugushina. In preparation)

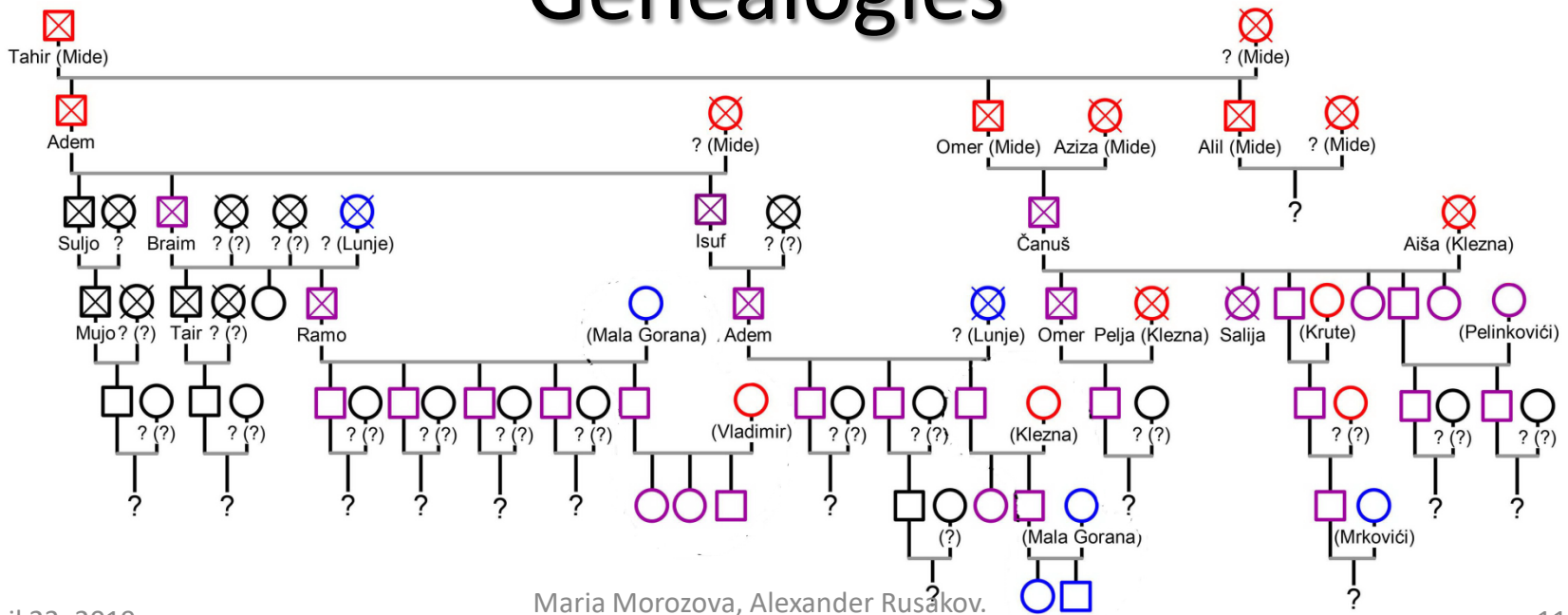


Lineage 1 – Kovačevići



Genealogies

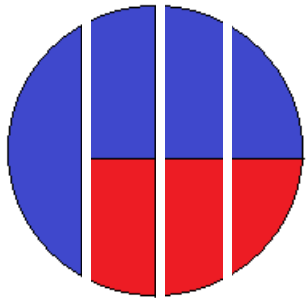
Lineage 2 – Tahirovići



Changes in competence in the lifespan

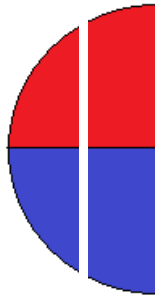
1

Male, 69 yo,
Velja Gorana



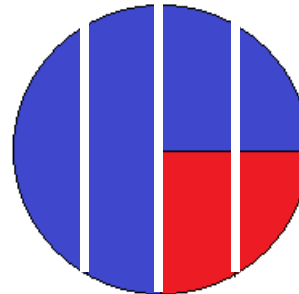
2

Female, 13 yo,
Velja Gorana



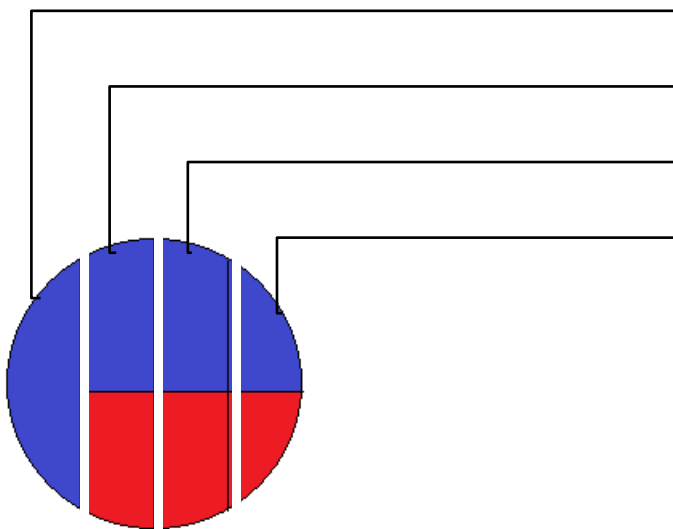
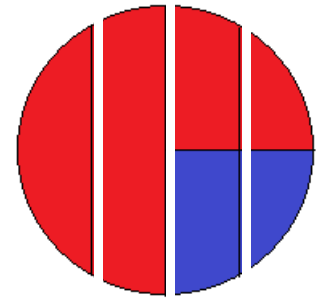
3

Female, 79 yo,
Mala Gorana



4

Female, 63 yo,
Ana e Malit (ALB)



before 5 yo

childhood (Male) / before marriage (Fem)

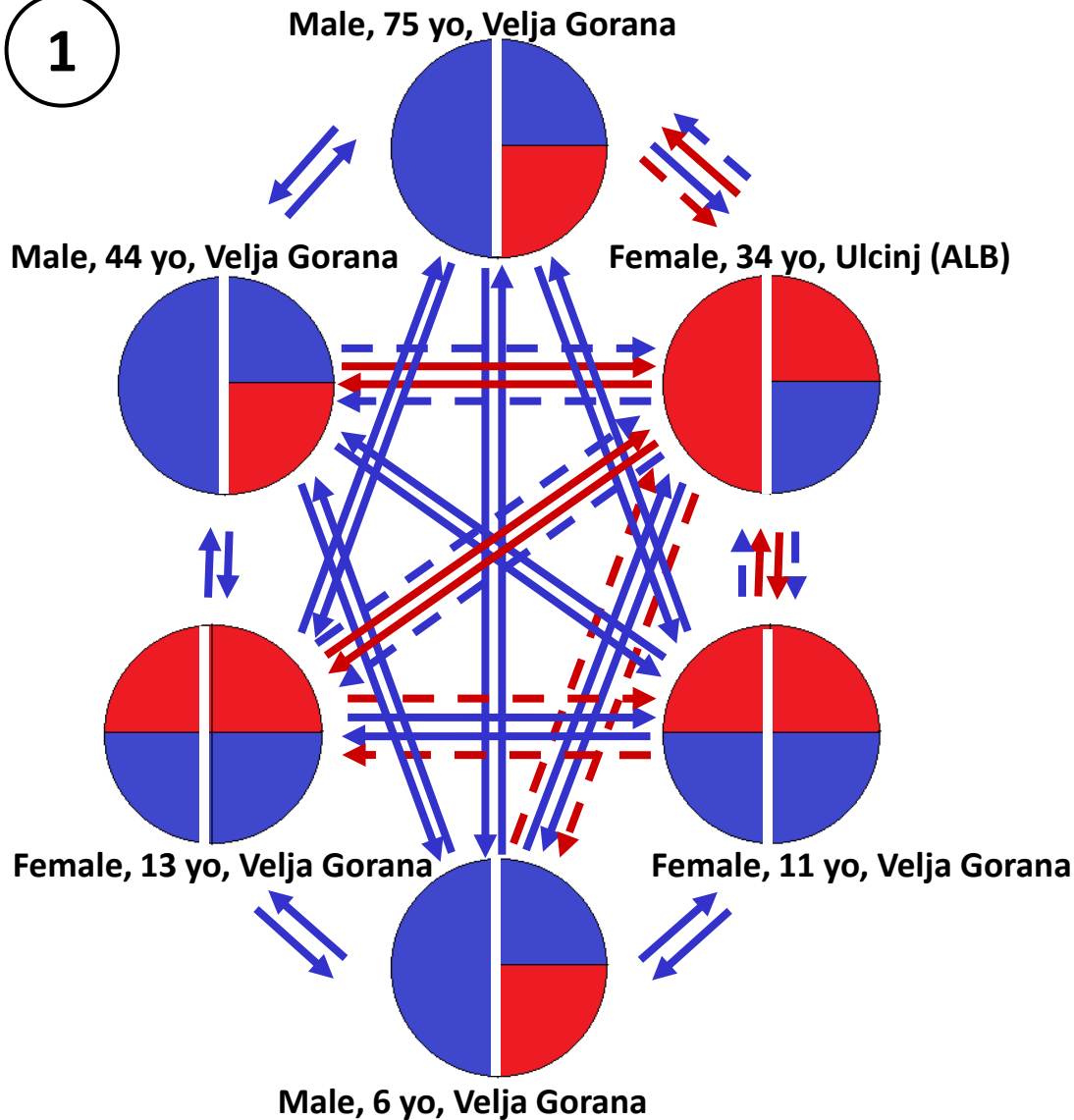
adulthood (Male) / after marriage (Fem)

older ages (now)

Montenegrin
Albanian

Use of languages in family communication

1



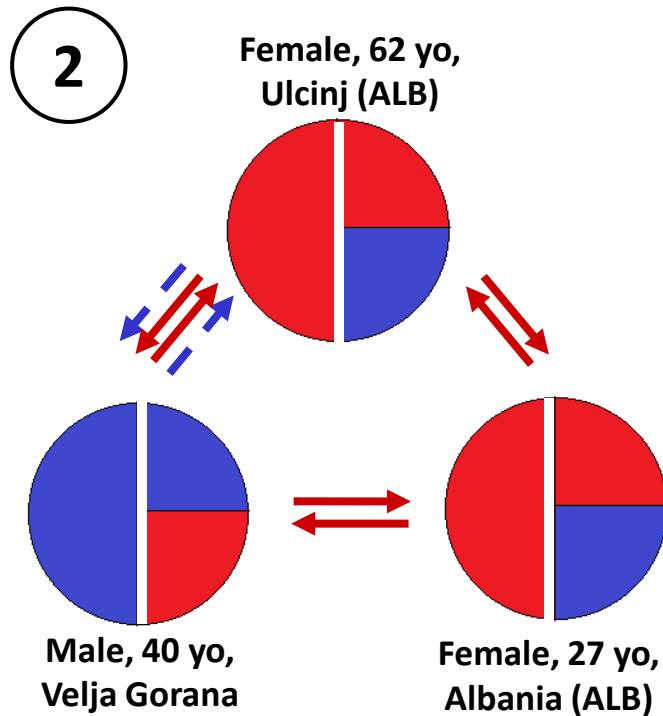
Montenegrin
Albanian

Language more frequently used in communication
Language less frequently used in communication

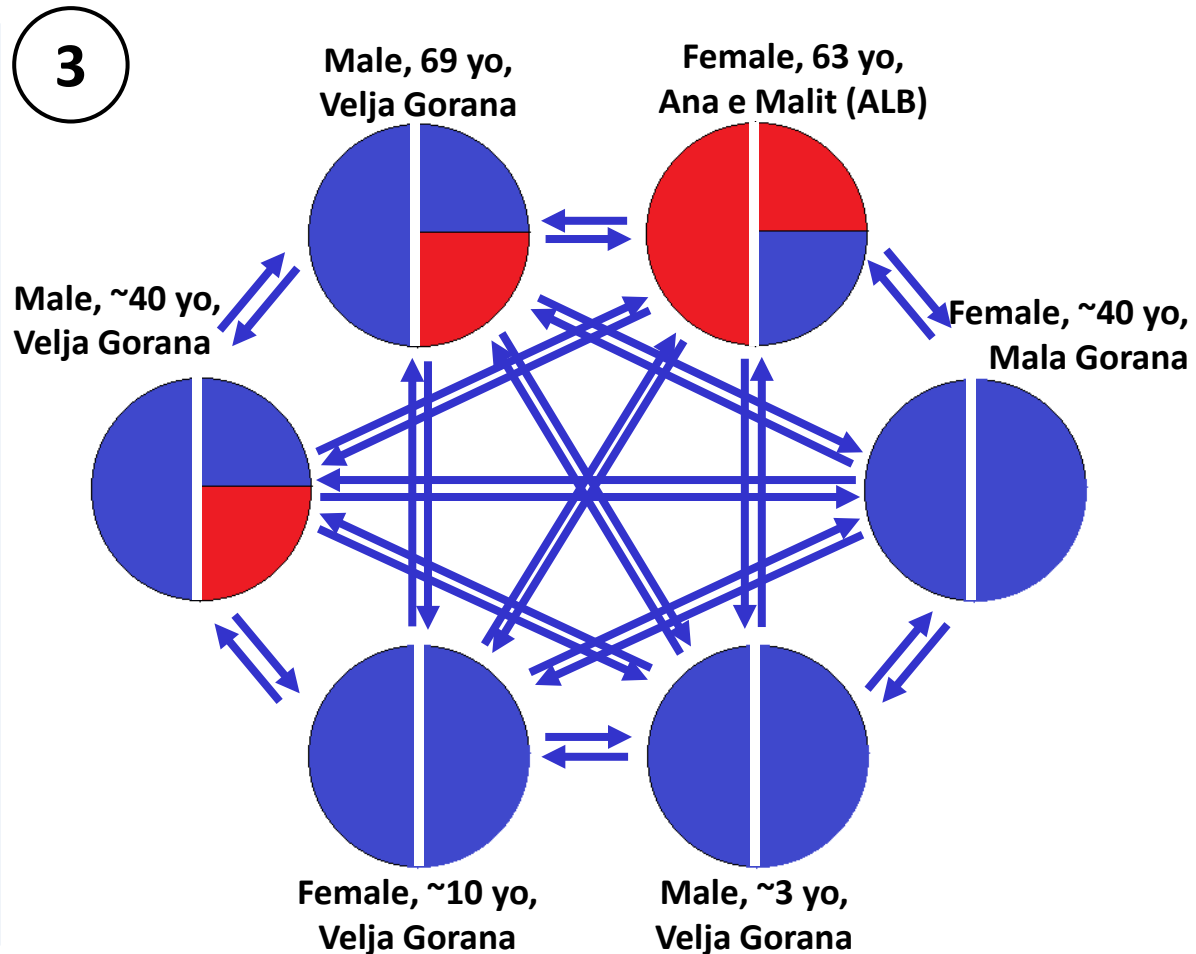


Use of languages in family communication

“Albanization”



“Slavicization”



Observations: Velja Gorana

- The community of Velja Gorana is open for the speakers of Montenegrin and Albanian:
 - contacts and marriages with speakers of Montenegrin (e.g. the Mrkovići) outside the village
 - *linguistic exogamy* – matrimonial bonds with Albanian villages
- Constant influx of native speakers of Albanian has a particular importance for the maintenance of the bilingual situation in Velja Gorana.

- From linguistic point of view, the language contact in Velja Gorana leads rather slowly to the rise of the number of lexical and syntactic calques both in Albanian and Montenegrin (Morozova 2019).
- *Balanced bilingualism*, together with the *open character of the community*, prevents both languages from the more rapid and radical changes (Морозова, Русаков 2018).

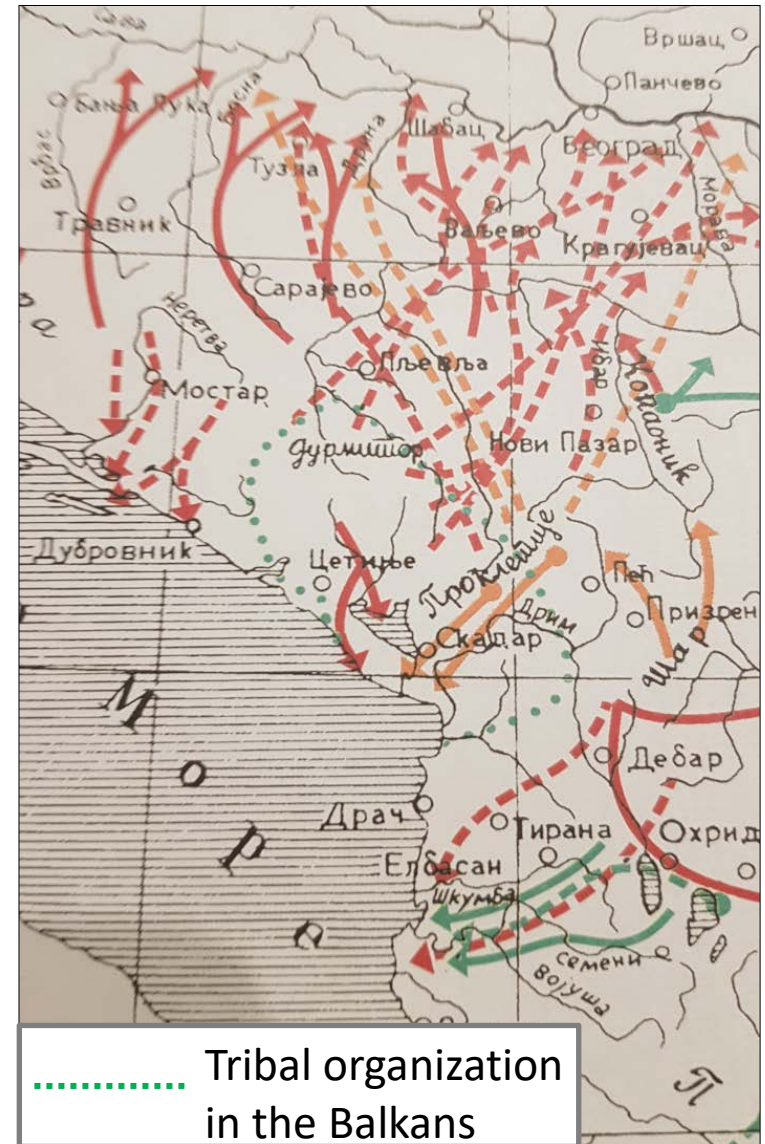
- The analysis of communication in several families shows that the *balanced language contact situation* in Velja Gorana is composed of a number of rather unbalanced micro-situations.
- The community includes groups of speakers with different linguistic behavior such as (a) bilingual men born in Velja Gorana, (b) Albanian wives, and (c) “Montenegrin” wives from bi- and monolingual villages of the region.

- The linguistic competence of the individual speakers may change over the lifespan. The main tendency is the transition from monolingualism to bilingualism.
- The preservation of balanced bilingualism seems to have community-internal rather than external motivation.
 - Even though all community members have been taught standard Serbian/Montenegrin at school, Albanian wives claim that they really learned Montenegrin only after marriage in Velja Gorana.

Observations: Mrkovići and the Montenegrin-Albanian border

- We may assume that before the 18th century the marriage patterns and composition of the population in the whole Mrkovići area resembled those of the today's Velja Gorana.
- *Linguistic exogamy* and *balanced bilingualism* probably existed in most part of the Mrkovići villages, but these bilingual settings proved to be less stable than Velja Gorana.

- The Mrkovići area is a part of a bigger zone of maintenance, or rather revitalization in the early Ottoman time (XV–XVII c.), of the pre-state tribal structures (Mne. *pleme*, Alb. *fis* ‘clan, tribe’), which includes the Northern Albania and most part of Montenegro (map from Соболев 2013, based on Cvijić 1918).

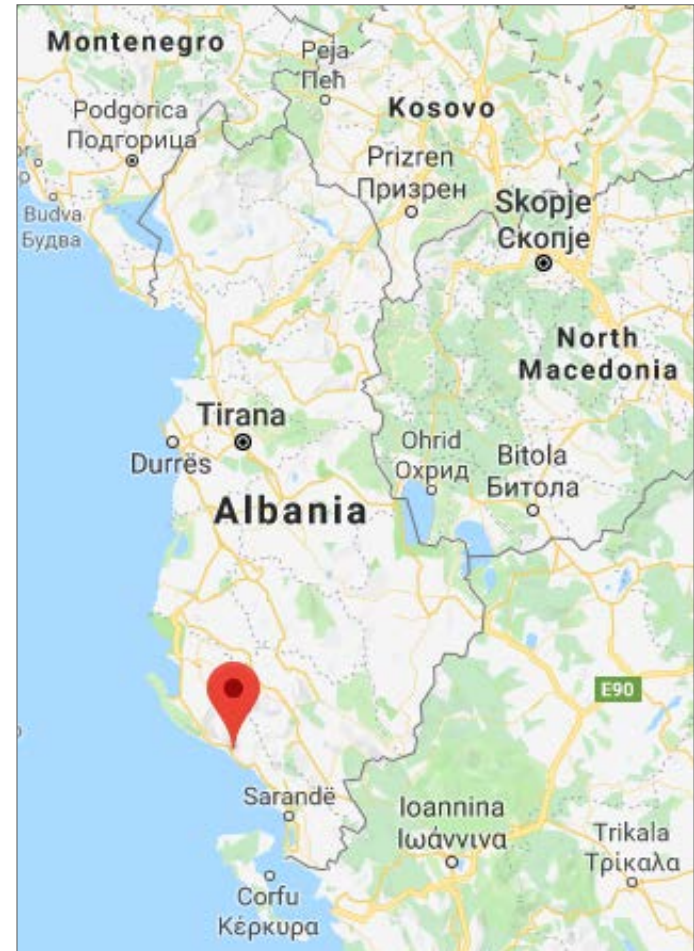


- One of the main characteristics of this zone was more or less strict tribal exogamy and *linguistic exogamy* which can be considered an epiphenomenal consequence of the tribal one.
 - The most famous example in the Serbian ethnography is the “tribe”, or *pleme* Kući in the south-east of Montenegro. Kući were (at least partially) bilingual and acted as an exogamous entity, taking wives from the neighboring Albanian regions (Ровинский 1897; Ердельановић 1981 [1907]).

- We may suppose that situations similar to Velja Gorana might be typical also for the other parts of the Montenegrin-Albanian “tribal zone”, including the Mrkovići area.
- In the Mrkovići area, loss of *linguistic exogamy* (the intensive influx of monolingual Slavic-speaking population in the end of the XIX c. and marriages between the indigenous bilingual population and the newcomers) was among the key factors for the loss of *balanced bilingualism*.

Observations: Balkans

- It would be interesting to find the cases of such type of multilingualism outside the Montenegrin-Albanian “tribal zone”.
- The area(s) of the Albanian-Greek contacts in South Albania, e.g. the Himara region (Соболев 2017; Joseph et al. 2019).



- Beginning of the contacts – ?, but no later than the 13th – 14th century.
- Both languages have the characteristics of sociolinguistically dominant languages:
 - Albanian is the language of administration and education;
 - Greek – (historically) the language of the Hellenic culture and the Orthodox church in the Balkans and (now) the language of the neighbor state which is very important for the economic activity of *Himariotes*.

- In the village of Palasa, all speakers master and use two languages, Albanian and Greek, “in equal degrees” (Соболев 2017: 427).
- There are (and were) intermarriages between Albanian and Greek Orthodox villages of the area.
- “Fluctuating” self-identification: an inhabitant of this area may declare himself Greek or Albanian depending on political or economic circumstances.

Conclusions

- The current situation in Velja Gorana shares many of the traits typical for the other cases of small-scale multilingualism (cf. Lüpke 2016; Singer & Harris 2016, etc.).
- Ethnic and linguistic exogamy plays major role in the development and maintenance of this situation.

- We suppose that in the past such situation might be characteristic for the whole “tribal zone” in the Albanian-Montenegrin border.
- Probably such situation may be postulated also for the Albanian and Greek communities of the Southern Albania.
- As for other parts of the Balkans, we may only hypothesize that the situations of such type might be more widespread of the past and played an important role in the formation of the Balkan linguistic area. However, the majority of the modern multilingual situations in the Balkans have rather polyglossic character.

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Thank you for your attention!

