

NT clusters in the Balkan languages

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The Balkan Sprachbund is a linguistic community which is defined by morphosyntactic features. However, it also has some phonetic peculiarities of which the most specific ones are: 1. traces of the occurrence of the common phoneme (a nasal schwa) in all “proper” Balkan languages in Medieval Ages, and 2. a unique functioning of the clusters containing a nasal sonant and a homorganic occlusive. The second feature is constituted by a set of various phenomena (some trivial and some exceptionally unique) which occur in Greek, Albanian, Macedonian, Italian, and Arumanian. Processes regarding these clusters are extremely concentrated in the area of the central–western part of the Balkan Sprachbund. The common denominator of these – sometimes very different phenomena – is a tendency towards monophonemic value of the clusters in question. The result of this tendency is an enormous number of options occurring in the Balkan dialects, where clusters very often function as facultative realizations of voiced stops, or vice versa. The most unusual feature – when viewed from the perspective of European languages – is the occurrence of the NT clusters at the beginning of words.