Balkan Insights into the Syntax of *mē in Indo-European

Brian D. Joseph
The Ohio State University

Abstract:

Proto-Indo-European had two sentential negation markers, *mē, used in prohibitions (negative commands) and *ne/nē, used in other sentence-types (e.g. indicative mood statements, subjunctive clauses, etc.). A survey of the reflexes of *mē across the family reveals other functions for it, e.g. word-formation, elliptical negation, etc. Interestingly, one function, independent occurrence as a one-word prohibitive utterance (like English *Don't!*) is restricted just to Indo-European languages of the Balkans, specifically Albanian, Post-Classical (particularly Modern) Greek, and Romany. The Romany development is a relatively recent phenomenon, resulting from language contact, but the history of the Albanian and later Greek developments is less clear. Various explanations for this apparent Balkan innovation are explored here, with particular attention to what they say about the range of uses reconstructible for *mē in Proto-Indo-European.

Author's address:

Department of Linguistics
222 Oxley Hall
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio USA 43210-1298
(joseph.1@osu.edu)

Balkan Insights into the Syntax of *mē in Indo-European

Brian D. Joseph
The Ohio State University

1. Introduction

For all the fact that several of the Indo-European languages found in the Balkan peninsula in the Medieval period (roughly post-600AD), specifically Albanian, Greek, Romany, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, and (southeastern dialects of) Serbian, offer many developments of great significance for students of historical linguistics in general and of language contact in particular due to the striking structural convergences and extensive borrowings they show that have formed the prototype for the notion "Sprachbund"[1], this phase in the history and prehistory of these languages has played a relatively insignifcant role in Indo-European linguistics. This paper attempts to rectify this situation to some extent through a consideration of some facts concerning the use of certain negation markers in these languages that suggest an intriguing interpretation in which the Balkans provide a glimpse of a possible Proto-Indo-European use of the marker in question. Accordingly, after some general background on negation in Indo-European, the specifically Balkan realizations are presented, and the particulars of their prehistory are explored.

2. Background on Negation in Indo-European

It is generally agreed[2] that there were two distinct sentential negative markers in Proto-Indo-European: *ne/nē and *mē. The former, as the representative data in (1) shows, has a fairly wide distribution across the various branches of the family, and shows variant forms,

---

[1]The classic work on the Balkan Sprachbund is Sandfeld 1930; Friedman & Joseph (To appear) will be the first English-language compendium on the Balkan languages.
[2]So Brugmann 1886, Meillet 1924, Pokorny 1959, among others.

suggesting a considerable vitality to it in the proto-language that continued into the individual languages:[3]

(1)   Indo-Iranian: Sanskrit *na/nā*, Avestan *na-*
       Balto-Slavic: Old Church Slavonic *ne*, Lithuanian *ne*
       Italic: Latin *ne* (e.g. in *ne-que* 'and not'), *nē* 'that not'
       Germanic: Gothic *ni*
       Anatolian: Hittite *na-* (e.g. in *na-tta* 'not')
       Celtic: Old Irish *na-* (in *na-ch* 'not', from *ne-kʷe)
       Albanian: *n-* (in *nuk* 'not')

whereas *mē shows a somewhat more limited distribution and general invariance,[4] as the representative data in (2) demonstrate:[5]

(2)   Indo-Iranian: Sanskrit *mā*, Avestan *mā*
       Armenian: *mi*
       Greek: μή ([mē])
       Tocharian: AB *mā* , B *mar*
       Albanian: *mos* (from *mē-kʷid or possibly *mē-kʷe)

The usual assumption[6] about function of *mē versus *ne is that the distribution in Proto-Indo-European was essentially that seen in Vedic Sanskrit, where *mā* occurs in prohibitions whereas *na* occurs in non-prohibtions. This assumption is made despite the fact that Tocharian uses *mā* as a simple nonprohibitive negator, with Tocharian A *mā* being distinct from the element *mar* used in prohibitions while Tocharian B uses *mā* in prohibitions as well; that is, the Tocharian developments are taken to be secondary, representing an expansion of the domain of *mē at the expense of *ne. The possibility of such secondary developments becomes

---

[3]The distribution is even greater if the occurrence of *ne/nē in some form, in particular a zero-grade *n-, occurring in compounds is taken into account. Although this use is admittedly not sentential negation, it is widespread in Indo-European and thus extends considerably the range of distribution for *ne/nē to languages such as Tocharian and Greek (e.g., ἀν-ελπις 'without hope').

[4]It has been suggested (van Windekens 1976) that the Tocharian AB form is from *mə, a possibility explored further in Joseph 1991, but such a pre-form is not a necessity.

[5]As noted in §3 below, Slavic, secondarily via borrowing, also has come to show a reflex of *mē.

[6]Again, see Brugmann 1886, Meillet 1924, Pokorny 1959.

important when the full range of functions for instantiations of *mē in the individual languages is considered below.

While the function of *mē then is clear, the details of its syntax, with regard in particular to the verb form it co-occurs with, are harder to reconstruct. Vedic Sanskrit (almost) exclusively uses the injunctive (the so-called augmentless past tense forms) with *mā*. There are a few deviations from this usage, but they can be explained away. The main deviation is *mā bhujema* 'may we not atone', which occurs five times in the Rig Veda, always in this form; it is an apparent first person plural optative, which would be at odds with the usual syntax of *mā* in Sanskrit, and has thus been explained, by Hoffmann (1967: 96-7),[7] as deriving instead from a misanalysis of a dative infinitive (*bhuj-e*) via a conflation of *(mā) bhujé me* and *(mā) bhujé nas* '(may it not be) for my/our atonement' with an appropriate but suppressed/understood form of 'be'. Similarly, Vedic *mā hrnutām* 'let him not be angry' (RV 8.103.12) need not have any bearing directly on the syntax of *mē, since even though an apparent imperative with *mā*, it could simply represent an innovation just emerging in (late) Vedic, given the more frequent use of the imperative in prohibitions in Classical Sanskrit; alternatively, it can be explained, following Hoffmann (1967:94-5), as a false normalization of an affective pluta form *hrnutā3m*, for expected injunctive *hrnuta*.

Still, there is considerable variation within and across other languages as to which verb form is found with *mē. For instance, Old Persian uses the injunctive, imperative, optative, and subjunctive with *mā*,[8] Armenian uses the subjunctive and imperative with *mi*; and Greek uses the imperative with μή. This variation may be connected with the obsolescence of the injunctive, if Proto-Indo-European used the injunctive with *mē, or perhaps the variability is to be reconstructed for the proto-language, reflecting presumed (but not directly attested) nuances of meaning associated with the different verb forms used. A definitive solution to this aspect of the syntax of *mē may not be achievable; still, for the purposes of examining

---

[7]See also Joseph 1991 for some further discussion.

[8]Thus, conceivably, *mā bhujémas* and *mā hrnutám* should simply be taken at face value, and not explained away; that is, they could thus reflect an inherited variation (at least possibly from Indo-Iranian) in the verb form that co-occurs with *mē.

certain uses found in the Balkans, it is sufficient to concentrate just on the broader functions of *mḗ to the exclusion of finer details of its use.

Even with respect to the broader functions, though, more is evident than just the prohibitive use, for all the fact that it is clearly the primary use for this element in Indo-European. In particular, as noted above with regard to the use of *mḗ in Tocharian for ordinary sentential negation, some languages have non-prohibitive uses, and more such examples are brought out below. Moreover, as the later discussion demonstrates clearly, there are even some non-negative uses to be reckoned with. Nonetheless, the prohibitive use is shared by all the languages that have *mḗ and so projecting that use back into Proto-Indo-European is reasonable.

3. *mḗ in the Balkans

Although some of the relevant information about reflexes of *mḗ in the Balkans is given above in (2), more details are needed. In particular, since what is especially interesting about the Balkans linguistically is what happened to the languages in the medieval and modern periods, facts about *mḗ in this period become crucial. The following is especially noteworthy.

Ancient Greek μή is realized as [mi] in Modern Greek, due to regular sound changes. In addition, in the modern language, a final [-n] is found with μή before vowels in its verb-based uses, due to analogical pressures from the indicative negator δεν ([ðen], from earlier οὐδέν 'not (at all)'). Albanian *mos* contrasts in its prohibitive use with *s'* and *nuk*, the negatives used with indicatives. Indic is represented in the Balkans from approximately the 10th century (AD) onward, through Romany (the language of the Gypsies), and at least the non-Vlax dialects of Romany seem to continue the earier Indic patterns of negation discussed above, with *ma* in prohibitions, versus *na* in non-prohibitions. Finally, the Balkans in the modern era provide evidence for yet another branch of Indo-European with a form of *mḗ. In particular, Southeast Macedonian and Eastern Bulgarian dialects show the form *mi* in prohibitions, clearly borrowed from Greek (so Topolinjska 1995, Greenberg 1996) given its form and its absence from Slavic languages not in intimate contact

with Greek, but still very much a part of these dialects, no matter how it may have entered them.

The functions found for Greek *mi* and Albanian *mos* are actually quite a bit more varied than just the prohibitive use so clearly inherited from Proto-Indo-European, and a survey of all these uses reveals a rather extensive range. Moreover, they turn out to be strikingly similar in scope and number. This set of functions is listed in (3):[9]

(3) Functions of *mi / mos* in Greek (Grk) and Albanian (Alb)
   a. modal negator (in Grk, of subjunctive clauses; in Alb, of subjunctive and optative verbs)
   b. nonfinite negator (in Grk, of active participles; in Alb, of active participles (gerundives) and the infinitival formation)
   c. introducer of prohibitives and negator of hortatives (in Grk, with finite verb forms, not with imperatival forms per se; in Alb, with imperatives and hortatives)
   d. introducer of negatively evaluated clausal complements to verbs and nouns of fearing (in Grk, on its own as complementizer or with another morpheme in *mípos*; in Alb, with complementizer *se* (as *se mos*), though cf. (h) regarding another interpretation of *se mos*)
   e. introducer of tentative main-clause questions (in Grk, with variant *mípos*)
   f. independent utterance expressing negative actions (i.e. prohibitions)
   g. negative combining-element in word-formation (in Grk, in isolated formations; in Alb, more productively)
   h. pleonastic negator in clausal complements to heads with negative force (in Grk, e.g. *embodízo* 'prevent'; in Alb, e.g., *frikë* 'fear', thus overlapping somewhat with (d))
   i. negator of ellipted (i.e. "understood") elements
   j. negator of nonverbal lexical items and constituents (not in Alb, unless (g) belongs here, or vice-versa)

---

[9]This list draws on Joseph & Janda 1999 (and see also Joseph 2000a); the Albanian data in (3) and (4) and elsewhere is taken largely from Newmark et al. 1982, and Greek examples are either from native speaker consultants or from published sources, as indicated.

Examples of each of these functions are given in (4), cited in a roughly phonemic transcription for Greek and in standard orthography for Albanian; the (i) examples are from Greek, and the (ii) examples from Albanian):

(4) Examples of uses seen in (3)
a. i. borí   na   min éxun   kimiθí
        can/3SG SUBJUNC *mi*   have/3PL slept
         'It is possible that they haven't gone to bed yet' (lit., "It can
         that they have not slept")
    ii. sikur të   mos jetë   bujku   usta
        if   SUBJUNC *mos*   be/3SG.SUBJ farmer/NOM.DEF
        craftsman
         'if the farmer were not a craftsman'
b. i. min éxondas   iðéa   ja   óla aftá, o jánis
        mi   have/ACT.PPL idea/ACC about all-these the-John/NOM
        tin   pandréftike
        her/ACC married/3SG
         'Not having any idea about all these things, John married
         her' (Veloudis 1982:22)
    ii. për të   mos e marrë / duke   mos marrë   asgjë
        INFINITIVAL *mos* him take/PPL GRDV *mos* take/PPL anything
         'in order not to take him'   / '(while) not taking anything'
c. i. min to   petáksis!
        mi it/ACC throw/2SG
         'Don't throw it out!'
    ii. mos u   bëni   merak
        mos NONACT make/2PL care
         'Don't worry!'
d. i. to   éskase   apó fóvo   min ton   xtipísun
        it/ACC burst/3SG from fear/ACC *mi* him/ACC beat/3PL
         'He ran off for fear that they might beat him' (Mackridge
         1985:300)
    ii. kam   frikë se mos na   shajë
        have/1SG fear that *mos*   us/ACC scold/3SG
         'I fear lest he scold us'
e. i. min íðes   to peðí?
        mi saw/2SG the-child/ACC
         'Did you perhaps (happen to) see the child?'
    ii. mos e   njihni   atë?
        mos him   know/2PL him/ACC

'Do you (perhaps) know him?'
f. i. mi!   (NB: *min! (with final -*n*))
        'Don't!'
    ii. mos!
        'Don't!'
g. i. *míte* 'not even; neither' (for segmentability of *míte*, cf. *úte*
        'not even; neither'); *mi᷄én* 'zero' (for segmentability, cf.
        the finite indicative negator *᷄en*); *mi᷄é* 'not even; neither'
        (infrequent; cf. *u᷄é* 'not even; neither'); *mípos* (a variant of
        mi(n) in main-clause tentative questions and with verbal and
        nominal complements of fearing, and note also, with regard
        to segmentability, the complementizer *pos* 'that'); *mi᷄ár(is)*
        'perhaps' (in tentative questions, though rather infrequent;
        mí᷄aris also occurs, even more rarely)
    ii. *mosbarazi* 'inequality' (cf. *barazi* 'equality'); *mosbesim*
        'mistrust' (cf. *besoj* 'I trust'); *mosnjohje* 'ignorance' (cf.
        njoh 'I know'); *mosqeni* 'nonexistence' (cf. *qeni* 'being');
        inter alia
h. i'. fováme   na   min ér᷄i   (Veloudis 1982:11)
        fear/1SG SUBJUNC *mi* come/3SG
        'I am afraid that he may come' (NB: 'I am afraid he may
        not come')
    i". ᷄e se   embo᷄ízo   na   min milás
        NEG you/ACC prevent/1SG SUBJUNC *mi* speak/2SG
        'I do not prevent you from speaking' (NB: 'I do not
        prevent you from not speaking')   (Thumb 1964:200)
    ii. kam   frikë se mos na   shajë
        have/1SG fear that *mos* us/ACC scold/3SG
        'I fear lest he scold us'
i. i.' parkarizména ke mi aftokínita   ítan pandú
        parked/NTR.PL and *mi* automobiles/NTR were everywhere
        'Parked and unparked cars (i.e. 'cars that are parked and
        (ones that are) not (parked)') were everywhere' (based on
        Mackridge 1985:244)
    i." mi ta xérja   su ékso
        mi the-hands/ACC your outside
        'Don't (put) your hands out!'(Mackridge 1985:244)
    i."' mi xirótera
        mi worse/NTR.PL.COMPVE
        'What next? God forbid!' (literally: "(May) not worse
        (happen)!")

ii. si   mos më   keq
        how *mos* COMPVE bad
        'in a lamentable state' (literally: "how (might) not worse
        (happen)?")
j. i.' se períptosi mi pliromís   tis epitajís
        in case/ACC *mi* payment/GEN the-check/GEN
        '... in (the) case of nonpayment of the check'
    i." i   mi kapnistés   káþonde eðó
        the *mi*   smokers/NOM sit/3PL   here
        'Non-smokers sit here'
    ii. NO EXAMPLES (UNLESS SOME INSTANCES OF (g) GO HERE)

There is thus striking convergence between Greek and Albanian with respect to the functions of cognate items. Even with these similarities, however, there are some key differences between Greek and Albanian on the use of *mē* that deserve mention.

For one thing, as a word-formative element (3/4g), there are differences in productivity: *míte* type formations are rather limited in Greek, but *mos-* is fairly productive in Albanian, especially with deverbal nouns in *-im*. If, however, *mos-* in this function is paralleled actually by *mi* as a *constituent* negator, as in (3/4j), then both are fairly productive, and Albanian would then have the full range of uses found in Greek.

Second, Albanian *mos* is used for negation in conditionals, as in (5a), while Greek now uses the finite indicative negator *ðen* in such constructions,[10]. as in (5b):

(5) a. në mos gaboj
        if *mos* err/1SG
        'if I am not mistaken'
    b. an ðen se   pistépso ....
        if not you believe/1SG
        'if I don't believe you'.

Third, regarding verbal moods used with *mē* in prohibitives (cf. (3/4c)), in variation reminiscent of what is found around Indo-European, as discussed above, Albanian *mos* occurs with imperative,

---

[10]However, early 20th century katharevousa (high-style) Greek had conditional clauses negated with *mi*.

while Modern Greek *mi(n)* occurs with nonimperative forms. Thus the Albanian prohibitive usage could be taken simply to be a case of nonindicative negation, as in (3/4a), while the Greek usage is special and does not reduce to nonindicative negation.

Fourth, independent *mos*, besides having prohibitive value (cf. (3/4f)) also has a nonprohibitive exclamatory value that is not found in Greek:

(6) Është vrarë   Kajoja!   — Mos!
   is/3SG slain/PPL Kajo/NOM.DEF *mos*
   'Kajo has been slain! OH NO!'

Finally, the Albanian question-particle use in (3/4e) is broader than the corresponding Greek use. In particular, *mos* can have overt negative dubitative value but *mi(n)* is only dubitative, and is thus at best only weakly negative:

(7) Mos është e fortë
   mos is/3SG strong/FEM
   'She isn't strong, is she?'

Overall, these facts concerning Greek and Albanian reflexes of *mḗ* raise various tangential (but interesting) synchronic issues for these languages in particular and thus some intriguing theoretical ones as well,[11] but given the parallels, even with the differences, the diachronic side of how they arose is what is of particular concern here. Accordingly, the history of these functions is explored in the next section.

---

[11]Thus, it is fair to ask if all the uses of *mos*/*mi(n)* are synchronically relatable, in light of the similarities but concurrent differences (e.g. some non-negative uses such as (3/4e), in questions) that each shows in its own language. Moreover, are they all the same kind of element (affix, "clitic", word, etc.)? Finally, what sort of morphological construct can be invoked here? Janda & Joseph 1999 discuss these matters, and argue for *meta-templates* (or "meta-redundancy-rules"), which express formal and also functional identities shared by a set of distinct morphemes or uncollapsible morphological rules, and *morphological constellations*, ensembles of word-formational rules or morphemes united by meta-templates, as a way of capturing the unity-in-diversity these elements show.

4. History of the Functions in §3

In the face of similarities between Greek and Albanian found as extensively as those in (3) and (4), given the medieval Balkan context and the well-known contact-related parallels found among languages in the Balkans, one might be tempted to think that the parallelism is entirely due to language contact. That, however, is not necessarily the case here.

First, with regard to the history of these functions in each of the languages individually, a careful search of standard sources on Ancient Greek grammar and lexicon[12] reveals that all of the functions in (3/4) for Modern Greek *mi(n)* are found in Ancient Greek for μή, except for (3/4f). That is, in all of Ancient Greek, one can find a modal negator use of μή, a use in prohibitions, a use in questions, a use in complements to verbs of fearing, and so on, but there are no instances of the independent usage of μή expressing negative actions, i.e. as a one-word prohibitive utterance. At most, there is an elliptical use where it occurs with other words, as in (8), but none where μή is by itself:

(8) μή μοι σύ (Euripides *Medea* 964)
    [mē moi su]
    NEG me/DAT you/NOM
    'None of that to/for me!' (literally: "Not to-me you")

Inasmuch as there is implicit in (8) an understood 2SG verb such as 'give' or 'do', so that it is essentially "May you not do anything to/for me", (8) could simply be understood as an instance of an elliptical prohibition, a use reminiscent of that seen in (3/4i).

With regard to Albanian *mos*, it is harder to tell about the prehistory of the uses in (3) - (7) due to the language's rather late attestation (15th/16th century AD), but here, as also for the prehistory of the Greek uses, the comparative method allows for some insights. In particular, for most of these functions, parallels — each compelling to a greater or lesser degree of course — occur elsewhere in Indo-European, especially but not exclusively in Sanskrit,

---

[12]For instance, Kühner & Gerth 1904, Liddell & Scott 1968, etc.

suggesting that they could represent functions of *mē in the proto-language that were inherited into the individual languages. A clear exception, again, is the independent prohibitive utterance usage, which has no direct parallels, though to some extent this is true for the 'fear'-complement and question uses as well.

Specifically, the non-prohibitive exclamatory value of the independent negative utterance seen in (6) has parallel in Skt *mā*, which can occur independently, often repeated (as *mā mā*) but only in the emphatic negation meaning 'Not so!', and not with a prohibitive sense. So also in Sanskrit there is an elliptical use of *mā* that is prohibitive in value, a usage which parallels (3/4i), e.g. *mā śabdam* 'Not a word!', where the accusative form of *śabda-* suggests an implicit governing verb. Similarly, the modal negator usage of (3/4a) finds parallels in the variety of verb forms used with *mā* in Old Persian, pointed out above, and possibly elsewhere in Indo-Iranian, depending, as noted above, on how Vedic evidence on the use of *mā* is assessed, and the use with nonfinite forms can be seen simply as an extension of the modal negation, given the often non-indicative value of infinitives and participles.

The word-formational function of *mos* (and *mi* as well) is paralleled in Sanskrit also, though without the degree of productivity that *mos* seems to have. Relevant forms include *mākis* 'no one' (compare also *nakis* 'no one', with the other negation marker) and *māciram* 'not long' (note also *naciram* 'not long'), among (a few) others.

The use with complements of fearing, as in (3/4d,h), finds a quasi-parallel in Armenian, in the expression *mi gowc'ē* 'lest, for fear that'. In this phrase, *gowc'ē* is the 3SG.SUBJ of the verb *goy* 'exist', and the combination has the meaning 'perhaps', being thus somewhat like Greek μή που ([mē pou]) 'lest perchance'. Still, this is not an exact parallel, so that the 'fear'-complement use of *mē as found in Albanian and Greek may not reflect a Proto-Indo-European usage directly.

Finally, Tocharian B *mā* has a question usage, which ostensibly would provide a parallel to (3/4e). This seems, however, to involve simple negation of a question, so it could very well be a carry-over

from a usage of *ne (the PIE ordinary sentence negator) when *mē replaced *ne, and need not be a special interrogative use of *mi.

The presence outside of the Balkans of comparanda to most of the uses of *mos* and *mi* is a solid basis for simply taking those Albanian-Greek uses in (3) and (4) that have parallels to be inheritances from Proto-Indo-European. With regard to the others, specifically the question usage, the "fear"-complement usage, and the independent prohibitive utterance usage, different conclusions may be in order.

The occurrence of both the question usage and the "fear"-complement usage in Ancient Greek and Albanian could be taken on its own to warrant positing these as inheritances from Proto-Indo-European, and the quasi-parallels attested elsewhere in the Indo-European family make this an attractive possibility. Alternatively, since Ancient Greek had these uses and since there are numerous uncertainties about the prehistory of Albanian, it may well be that these particular Greek-Albanian parallels were Greek innovations that then spread from Greek to Albanian; such a spread, however, would have to have occurred, if at all, in an early, pre-Balkanizing (i.e. pre-Medieval), period of contact between the languages.

As for the independent prohibitive utterance usage, there are no parallels outside of the Balkans, and thus it is less compelling to use the Greek and Albanian occurrences as a basis for projecting the usage back into Proto-Indo-European. More tellingly, though, this usage clearly must have arisen in Greek after the Ancient Greek period, given its absence from Ancient Greek,[13] so that this particular usage has a good chance of being an innovation that occurred on Balkan soil, either in one of Greek or Albanian, and spreading into the other, or as a shared or even independent innovation in the two. The fully Balkan character of this development is examined further in the next section.

---

[13]It is unlikely that this absence is just an accident of attestation, given the large amount of extant Greek from the relevant periods. Moreover, although there are no native speakers of Ancient Greek to consult on this point, I have been reassured by the reactions of several scholars who have an especially long and/or deep acquaintance with Ancient Greek. In particular, I thank Henry Hoenigswald and Joshua Katz for their "near-native" intuitions about the impossibility in Ancient Greek of an independent prohibitive use of μή.

5. Assessing the Balkan Nature of Independent *mē̆

Independent prohibitive *mē̆ in in the Balkans is not limited just to Greek and Albanian. As the forms in (9) show,[14] the independent use occurs in the Indic language Romany, as found in the Balkans, (where *ma* from *mē̆, cf. Sanskrit *mā*):

(9) a. Ma! 'Don't'
      b. Ma be, Ismet! 'Don't, hey, Ismet!'
      c. Ma borie, ma mi chhaj, ma rov 'Don't, O bride, don't my
          daughter/girl, don't cry!'
      d. Ma, ridzhai kjerava tukje, ma! 'Don't, I beg you, don't!'

It is noteworthy also that Romany shows an elliptical use of *ma*, in (9c), parallel to the usage seen in (3/4i). Since this usage seems not to be found elsewhere in Indo-Iranian, to judge at least from the evidence of Sanskrit discussed above, both the interpretation of the emergence of independent prohibitive *mē̆ as a post-Proto-Indo-European innovation and the Balkan character of the innovation receive further confirmation.

Furthermore, the independent use of a prohibitive marker, though not one derived from *mē̆, occurs in Balkan Slavic, with the markers *nemoj/nim* (< *ne mo(d)zi* 'be not able to') in Serbian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian, *neka* (< *ne xai 'don't bother') in Serbian, and *nedej* (< *ne dēi* 'do not do') in North and East Bulgarian, as discussed in Greenberg 1996. The markers in question are composed of native Slavic elements and can be used with verbs in full prohibitives, just as Greek *mi* and Albanian *mos* can, but also, as in (10), some occur as independent elements as well:

(10) a. (SWBlg) *Nemoj, ne pipaj* 'Hey, don't touch!'
      b. (SEMac) *Nim bre, Argíre* 'Don't, hey Argir!'
      c. (Srb) *Nekate, djeco*! 'Don't, children!'

Moreover, the forms in (10) seem to be innovative within Slavic, inasmuch as other means of expressing an independent prohibitive

---

[14]I thank my friend and colleague Victor Friedman of the University of Chicago for bringing these Romany examples to my attention.

are found in other branches of Slavic: Russian (East Slavic) uses *nil'z'a* and Polish (West Slavic) uses *nie* for 'Don't! No!'.[15]

Since these Balkan Slavic prohibitive markers are innovations within South Slavic, the independent use in (10) is most likely an innovative function as well. Given that Greek and Albanian show the independent prohibitive rather robustly, i.e. across all dialects, and that some dialects within Balkan Slavic have borrowed prohibitive *mi* from Greek (see section 3 above), it seems reasonable to hypothesize that this novel use of native Balkan Salvic prohibitive markers in Balkan is likewise due to the influence of Greek, a language in which the prohibitive marker can be used as an independent utterance with prohibitive force. Under such an analysis, and given as well that Romany has been seriously affected structurally and lexically by contact with other languages in the Balkans, it becomes likely too that the Romany use of *ma* seen in (9) is also an innovation, most probably from contact with Greek or Albanian speakers in the medieval period.

One is still left with the question of where either Greek or Albanian — or both together — got the independent use of *mē̄* as a one-word prohibitive utterance. Although the chronology of this usage in Greek — appearing only sometime after Ancient Greek — makes it hard to see it as an inheritance into Greek from Proto-Indo-European, it could in principle have been inherited into Albanian (and only Albanian), among languages of the Balkans. It is worth, therefore, examining the evidence concerning possible parallels elsewhere in Indo-European in somewhat greater detail.

Interesting in this regard is Armenian. Bedrossian 1875-9 (s.v.) gives an example that appears to be an independent prohibitive use of *mi*, the Armenian outcome of Proto-Indo-European *mē̄*: *mi, mi vɨtac'owc'anɨk'* 'No, no do not afflict (me)!'. It seems, however, that this could simply be an emphatic use of *mi* (like the Albanian usage in (6) usage or the Sanskrit noted in section 4) or else just copied from the adjacent prohibitive use of *mi* with a verb. Similarly, Meillet (1913:125) gives an absolute use of *mi* from Matthew 13:28-

---

[15]To judge from English usage, the difference between an exclamatory 'No!' and a prohibitive "Don't!" is somewhat subtle and perhaps slight; Polish *nie* could simply be a use of the ordinary sentential negator as an exclamation, rather than a specfically prohibitive use.

29 which he explains as a prohibitive ("tue es nicht", i.e. 'Don't (do it)!') but in this passage, *mi* corresponds to the simple indicative negator and free negation element οὐ in Greek; moreover, in the Greek οὐ is not used in a prohibitive sense, but rather as a negative reply to a yes-no question (θέλεις οὖν ἀπελθόντες συλλέξωμεν αὐτά; ὁ δέ φησιν "οὐ" ([tʰéleis oun apeltʰóntes sulléksōmen autá? ho dé pʰēsin "ou"]) 'Do you want us as we go out to collect these? He said "No!"'). Thus the ostensible parallels in Armenian break down under closer inspection, rendering the likelihood of the Balkan usage being an inheritance from Proto-Indo-European quite low.

It is important therefore to consider possible avenues through which such an innovation could have arisen. There are in fact a few reasonable paths here, and their existence means that contact need not have been the cause of the spread of this usage — though it certainly could have been — since it could have arisen independently as a parallel innovation found in various languages. In particular, the elliptical use, as seen in Ancient Greek (cf. the example from Euripides in (8), and in Sanskrit (see section 4), provides a basis from which any language could innovate independent prohibitive use of *mē̆ on its own. The negator in the elliptical construction has a more or less independent status to start with; in a sense, then, the completely independent use of *mē̆ would simply be an extension of the ellipsis and would represent the most elliptical expression possible. In such an account, however, it would still be interesting, though perhaps unexplained, that the parallel innovations are restricted to the Balkans. [16]

Another potential source for this usage is via analogy, spurred in part by Balkan Romance. In particular, (Daco-)Rumanian uses *nu* (from Latin *nōn*) as a prohibitive marker (e.g. nu face aceasta 'Don't do this!) and as independent word for 'no', and it can have an implicit prohibitive sense (thus like both English *No!* and English *Don't!*). Indeed, there are some situations in which an independent negative exclamatory utterance is hard to distinguish from the independent prohibitive utterance, as in English (and cf. footnote 15).

---

[16]This is of course the classic problem in the Balkans, and other regions with rampant contact between and among speakers of different languages, in that contact rarely can be conclusively proven, and likewise independent but parallel innovation rarely can be conclusively disproven.

This could have been a model from which a negative marker in prohibitives with a verb was extended into independent usage, essentially via a cross-linguistic proportional analogy, though differences between Greek *mi(n)* with verbs and independent (*n*-less) *mi* might argue against invoking such an analogy, or perhaps for Albanian being involved in this analogy first, before Greek was involved; in any case, the more likely source of analogy, if this is the right approach, would be Aromanian, the form of Rumanian spoken at one time all over the central Balkans; this analogy is sketched in (11):

(11) nu face! : nu! : : min kanis! : mi! : : mos bëj! : mos!
       do (Rom'n)   do (Grk)   do (Alb)

6. Conclusion

What the preceding data and interpretations reveal is that the independent use of reflexes of *mḗ as a single-word prohibitive element is a possible Balkanism (but not definitively so), that is, a possible innovation away from Proto-Indo-European usage that took place on Balkan soil. The circumstantial evidence points in that direction, in that the Balkans are the geographic focal point for this use of *mḗ. Furthermore, the evidence both of the "neo-Balkan" language Romany, which (to judge from Sanskrit evidence) acquired this use after entering the Balkans, and of Balkan Slavic is consistent with such a conclusion. Even so, it is hard to tell which language was the point of origination and thus the locus of diffusion, but this is a use which is especially likely to be frequent and salient in a contact situation and thus ought to be eminently diffusible. It seems to be a particularly good candidate for spread in the intense contact and (often imperfect) bilingualism that gave rise to the Balkan Sprachbund. A speaker of one of these languages, when confronted with a parallelism between (let's say) their *mi* and another's *mos* (or vice-versa) could easily have noted a difference in the extent of usage of the form in the other language and could have used that as the model for extending their use of their own native element. All aspects of this account represent a typical outcome from examining Balkan areal features.

A further consideration of relevance here, more along the lines of building a plausibility argument, is the fact that there is substantial

evidence among Balkan languages of the borrowing of elements associated with negation. As noted in section 3, for instance, Balkan Slavic borrowed prohibitive *mi* from Greek. Moreover, the Turkish negative element *yok* , generally a negative existential ('there is not') but also an emphatic free negation element (i.e., 'No!'), has been borrowed into Greek (taking the form γιοκ, where it is used as an emphatic negative, i.e. 'absolutely not!', as in τουρκική η κύπρος – γιοκ! ([turkikí i kípros? yók!]) 'Cyprus Turkish! No way!'. Similarly, Macedonian has also borrowed *yok* (e.g. *jok ut tuka* 'Get-out of here!', literally "Not, from here!"). Additionally, Modern Greek όχι ([óxi]) 'no!' derives from Ancient Greek ούχί ([ūkʰí]) 'no' but not straightforwardly; the unexpected deviations (accent shift and [o] from < ου >) make sense if influence of Turkish *yo(k)* 'no!' is recognized. Such an account, though admittedly speculative, accords with the date of the first appearance of όχι, in the 14th century, i.e. after initial Greek-Turkish contacts (cf. Landsman 1988-9; Joseph 2000b, 2000c). Finally, the common gesture for 'no' found among Greek and Turkish speakers, namely the upward head-nod (found also in Arabic speech communities and parts of Africa), probably spread from an Ancient Greek gesture for 'no' (so Morris et al. 1979). This conclusion is supported by its distribution in modern-day Europe: Greece, Turkey, and old Magna Graecia only, with a boundary in Italy between the Greek-type gesture and western European one coinciding with the ancient boundary between Greek Campania and Southern Etruscan territory. Negation therefore is something that can be passed from speaker to speaker even when different languages are involved, so a contact-based account of the spread of the innovative use of *mē̆ as an independent prohibitive utterance is well-justified on general grounds.

Uses of *mē̆ in the Balkans in the medieval period, therefore, even if not conclusively pointing the way to a particular Proto-Indo-European usage, nonetheless clearly hold some interest for the Indo-Europeanist. There is, as always, a methodological lesson to be drawn from this discussion, an important one, namely that the field of Indo-European studies, which focuses so much (and rightly so) on early and often ancient stages of the languages in question, needs to be open to the consideration of data from all stages of the languages, even when they are not early and are well past anything classifiable as ancient.

References

Bedrossian, Matthias

    1875-9   New Dictionary Armenian - English. Venice (reprinted 1973. Beirut: Librairie du Liban).

Brugmann, Karl.

    1886   Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen. Strassburg : K.J. Trübner.

Friedman, Victor A. & Brian D. Joseph

    To appear The Balkan Languages. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Greenberg, Robert

    1996   The Balkan Slavic Appellative (LINCOM Studies in Slavic Linguistics 6). Munich: LINCOM Europa.

Hoffmann, Karl

    1967   Der Injunktiv im Veda. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Verlag.

Janda, Richard D. & Brian D. Joseph

    1999.   "The Modern Greek Negator μη(ν)(-) as a Morphological Constellation". In Greek Linguistics: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Greek Linguistics, ed. G. Babiniotis. Pp. 341-351. Athens: Elinika Gramata.

Joseph, Brian D.

    1991. "A Diachronic Phonological Solution to the Syntax of Vedic Negative Particles". In Studies in Sanskrit

Syntax, ed. H. Hock. Pp. 113-122. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas Publishers.

Joseph, Brian D.

    2000a "Is Balkan Comparative Syntax Possible?" To appear in Balkan Syntax in a Comparative Light, eds. M. Rivero & A. Ralli. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Joseph, Brian D.

    2000b On the Development of Modern Greek óxi 'no'. Naturally! Linguistic Studies in Honour of Wolfgang Ulrich Dressler presented on the occasion of his 60th birthday, eds. C. Schaner-Wolles, J. Rennison, & F. Neubarth. Pp. 207-214. Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier,.

Joseph, Brian D.

    2000c Language Contact and the Development of Negation in Greek and the Balkans. To appear in Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Greek Linguistics, University of Cyprus (2000).

Kühner, R. & B. Gerth

    1904 Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache. Hannover/Leipzig: Hansche Buchhandlung.

Landsman, David

    1988-9 The History of some Greek Negatives: Phonology, Grammar, and Meaning. Glossologia 7-8: 13-31.

Liddell, H. & R. Scott

    1968 A Greek-English Lexicon. Oxford, at the Clarendon Press.

Mackridge, Peter

1985   The Modern Greek Language. Oxford: Oxford
        University Press.

Meillet, Antoine

1913   Altarmenisches Elementarbuch. (Reprinted 1981).
        Delmar, NY: Caravan Books.

Meillet, Antoine

1924   Introduction à l'étude comparative des langues indo-
        européennes Paris: Hachette.

Morris, Desmond, Peter Collett, Peter Marsh & Margaret
    O'Shaugnessy

1979   Gestures. Their Origins and Distribution. New York:
        Stein and Day.

Newmark, Leonard, Philip Hubbard, & Peter Prifti

1982   Standard Albanian. A Reference Grammar for
         Students. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pokorny, Julius

1959   Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch. Bern:
        Francke Verlag.

Redhouse, J.

1981   New Redhouse Turkish-English dictionary. Istanbul:
        Redhouse Press.

Sandfeld, Kristian

1930   Linguistique balkanique. Problèmes et résultats. Paris:
        Librairie ancienne Honoré Champion.

Thumb, Albert

1964 A Handbook of the Modern Greek Language.
    Grammar, Texts, Glossary. Chicago: Argonaut, Inc.
    Publishers (reprinting of 1912 edition).

Topolinjska, Zuzanna

  1995 Macedonian Dialects in the Aegean Part of Macedonia,
      Book 1: Syntax, Volume I. Skopje: Macedonian
      Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Van Windekens, Albert Joris

  1976 Le tokharien confronté avec les autres langues indo-
      européennes. Volume I: La phonétique et le
      vocabulaire. Louvain: Centre international de
      dialectologie générale.

Veloudis, Ioannis

  1982 Negation in Modern Greek. University of Reading
      Ph.D. Dissertation.