

## Na-Našu (Molise Slavic)

### With the characteristics of the dialect of *Montemitro*

Part I contains a general overview of Molise Slavic as a micro-language and considers all three of its dialects. Part II is dedicated to the characteristics of the dialect of Montemitro. The Molise Slavic denomination of this village is *Mundimitar*. It should be noted that there are three works that describe in a general way the formal structure of all PANGLOSS texts of the project “EuroSlav 2010”, of which the *Na-Našu* texts are part: BREU & ADAMOU (2011), ADAMOU & BREU (2013) und BREU (2017a). For an overview of Molise Slavic see also BREU (2020, online 1).

The Montemitro corpus consists of 22 texts, recorded in the years 2001, 2010, and 2012. Three men (born between 1933 and 1972) and one woman (born in 1936) were recorded. Like all *Na-Našu* texts in the PANGLOSS collection, these stories have been analysed at the following levels: orthography (broad phonological transcription), phonetics, morphological glosses, syntactic glosses, and Italian and German translations.

## Part I

### 1. Position, glottonym, immigration

#### 1.1 Geographic position of the Molise Slavic linguistic area

Molise Slavic (MSL) is a minority language on a central Southern-Slavic basis, still spoken in the three villages of Acquaviva Collecroce, Montemitro and San Felice del Molise in the southern Italian Region of Molise, Province of Campobasso. The geographical location of the Molise Slavic language area, which is approximately 35 km from the Adriatic Sea, is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: The Molise Slavic language area (Google Earth)**

## 1.2 Internal structure and glottonym

The Molise Slavic micro-language is divided into three clearly differentiated dialects, characterised, for example, by the pronunciation of historically short *-e* and *o*, especially in word-final position: In Acquaviva and San Felice they are pronounced as *-a*, while they are preserved in Montemitro. Other differences can be observed in the pluperfect particle, *bi* in Acquaviva, *ba* in the other two dialects, or in the case forms of the DAT.SG.F, etc. On the spot, there is no real glottonym, as people traditionally speak simply of *naš jezik* ‘our language’, or they use the Italian term *Slavo*, adapted as *Zlav*. The adverbial term *Na-Našu* ‘in our (manner)’, in Montemitro *Na-Našo*, is increasingly used also as a noun, which is why we have adopted this term as the linguistic designation for SLM in the PANGLOSS corpus. At the administrative and scientific level, in addition to “Molise Slavic” (in Italian *Slavomolisano*), terms such as “Molise Croatian”, “Italo-Croatian”, or “Slavisano” are also used, but they have no relevance for the local population.

## 1.3 Classification and linguistic affiliation, online resources

ISO639-3, Reference Name *Slavomolisano*, Identifier **svm**:

<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/svm>

<https://www.ethnologue.com/subgroups/western-25>

[Indo-European \(445\)](#)  
  [Balto-Slavic \(26\)](#)  
    [Slavic \(21\)](#)  
      [South \(10\)](#)  
        Western (7)  
          Bosnian [[bos](#)] (A language of [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#))  
          Chakavian [[ckm](#)] (A language of [Croatia](#))  
          Croatian [[hrv](#)] (A language of [Croatia](#))  
          Montenegrin [[cnr](#)] (A language of [Montenegro](#))  
          Serbian [[srp](#)] (A language of [Serbia](#))  
          **Slavomolisano [[svm](#)] (A language of [Italy](#))**  
          Slovene [[slv](#)] (A language of [Slovenia](#))

Change Request Documentation:

<https://iso639-3.sil.org/request/2012-068>

Language of the Day:

<https://www.ethnologue.com/language-of-the-day/2015-12-01>

Glottocode slav1254:

<https://glottolog.org/glottolog?iso=svm#12/41.8900/14.7000>

<https://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/slav1254>

OLAC Record:

<http://olac ldc.upenn.edu/item/oai:ethnologue.com:svm>

OLAC Resources (mostly Pangloss/Na-našu Euroslav2010):

<http://www.language-archives.org/language/svm>

## 1.4 The story of linguistic contacts

Slavic in Molise has been in contact with Romance varieties since the immigration of the ancestors of today's speakers some 500 years ago. In particular, contact was initially restricted to the Molise dialect, but since the unification of Italy (in the second half of the 19th century) standard Italian joined; see REŠETAR (1911/1997) for more detailed information on the history of the three remaining Slavic villages (and also of others, having lost their Slavic vernacular over the centuries) and on the historical situation of Molise Slavic.

The closest Slavic standard language from a genealogical point of view, Croatian, has no function in Molise and, except for individual words, remains completely incomprehensible to non-specialists. Literary works from Croatia have found no place in the local culture either. In all three villages, in addition to their Slavic micro-language, a southern variety of standard Italian is used, and in some cases even more dialectal forms.

For a long time language contact has been “absolute”, i.e. all the speakers of *Na-Našu* are bilingual, and in conversations outside the family and close acquaintances Italian dominates at all levels. Concerning Molise Slavic in writing, it must be said that non-specialists can neither read nor write it. In other words, Molise Slavs are illiterate with respect to the written form of their mother tongue.

Even as a living everyday vernacular, this Slavic micro-language is hardly passed on to the next generation. The sharp decline in the number of speakers of the younger generation has made Molise Slavic a language in danger of extinction.

## 2. Dialectal classification of *Na-Našu* in the Serbo-Croatian continuum

The immigration of the ancestors of the Slavs of Molise into their current areas of settlement began about 500 years ago, in the 16th century. This can be deduced from the absence of Turkicisms on one hand and of later linguistic developments in Croatian on the other. This is especially true for the absence of the ending *-ā* in the GEN.PL, while earlier developments, such as the vocalisation of *-l* at the end of the syllable, are present in SLM, too. On the basis of Serbo-Croatian dialectal peculiarities, it is assumed that the most probable area of emigration was the Dalmatian hinterland in the western valley of the river Neretva (in today's *Republika Bosna i Hercegovina*), see Figure 2. This does not exclude occasional coastal elements (Čacavisms) in the lexicon, such as *crikva* ‘church’ and *tuji* ‘foreigner’.



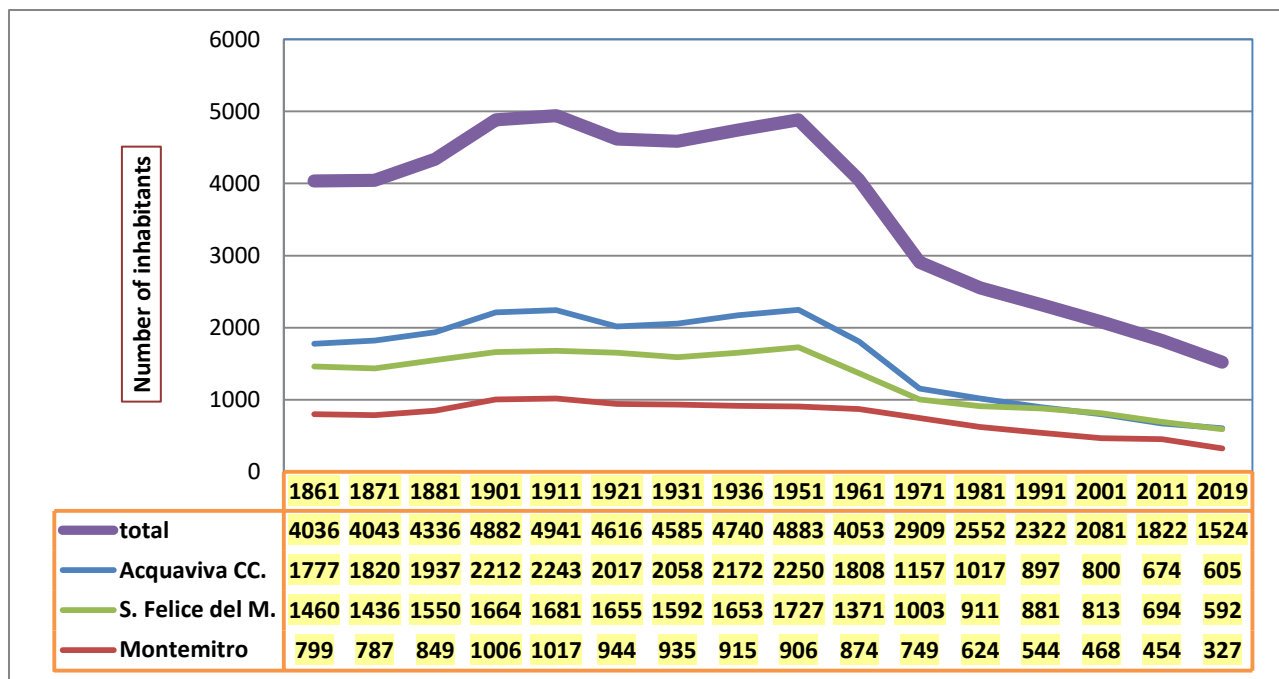
**Figure 2: Map of immigration of the Molise Slavs in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Google Earth)**

Its affiliation to the ‘Štokavian-Icavian’ dialect, spoken in the area of emigration, is indicated by the Molise Slavic realisation *što* of the Proto-Slavic interrogative pronoun *\*čto* ‘what’ and the realisation as an *i* of the Proto-Slavic *ě* (*jat*’, originally a very open *e*), cf. *dvi* ‘two’ F < *\*dvě*, as opposed to standard Croatian *dvije* and standard Serbian *dve*. In addition, the development of *-l* > *-a* in syllable-final position, as in *nosija* ‘to carry’ PTCP.SG.M < *\*nosil(ь)*, in contrast to *-o* (*nosio*) of the Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian standard languages allows for a more precise localisation.

### **3. Demographic situation, number of speakers**

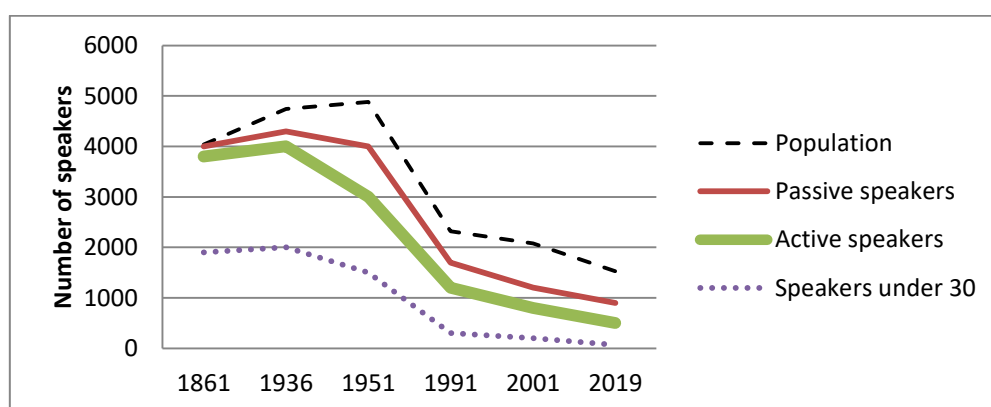
The percentage of active speakers in 2021 on the spot is well below 1000. The percentage of passive speakers, although higher, is nevertheless much lower than the number of inhabitants indicated in the official statistics at the end of 2019, which still amounts to about 1500 people in the three villages as a whole.

Figure 3 shows the demographic development of the three Molise Slavic villages, based on the values reported by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) since 1861. More precisely, it is based on the censuses that were usually held every 10 years, to which the 2019 data are added. The maximum number of inhabitants was reached in 1951. In the following decades there was a sharp decline, which has weakened somewhat since the 1970s. The reasons for the decline are mainly due to migration to Australia, to the Adriatic coast and to the North, resulting also in fewer offspring on the spot. The steep fall in the demographic curve in the 1950s is particularly evident in the total number of inhabitants.



**Figure 3: Demographic development according to censuses (ISTAT)**

In San Felice, in particular, only a few elderly people still speak *na-našu*. Although in Montemitro, the smallest village, most of the speakers still use Molise Slavic, here too the knowledge of the language is in sharp decline among the young. Acquaviva, the traditional central village of the Slavs of Molise, occupies an intermediate position in terms of the linguistic fidelity of its speakers. Since censuses have not usually collected linguistic data, these can only be estimated. Figure 4 provides such an estimate, based on longer time intervals than the previous one and on the assumed or interpolated linguistic fidelity of the speakers.



**Figure 4: Estimated decline of the number of speakers 1861-2019**

Based on the total number of inhabitants, we can assume a decrease of passive speakers from 95% to 40% of the total and of active speakers from 90% to 30%. The data in the diagram refer to the estimated maximum number of speakers in

the year in question. There are very few persons under 30 years of age who still have a fairly complete linguistic competence in Molise Slavic.

#### 4. Lexical borrowings and their percentage in the Molise Slavic lexicon

The strong influence of contacts with Italian varieties after the immigration led to the replacement of many Slavic words by Romance ones, including almost all abstract concepts and many conjunctions and prepositions. Above all, nouns are affected, as shown by the statistical analysis of the *Na-Našu* texts published in PANGLOSS. Molise Slavic as a whole has 24.8% of foreign words (tokens), whereas within the nouns, the foreign share is 45.7%, i.e. almost half of the vocabulary used (BREU 2017a: 71); for a comparison on the percentage of borrowings compared to the other micro-varieties in the PANGLOSS corpus, see ADAMO et al. (2016), which shows that in SLM it is much higher than in the other micro-languages considered there.

Traditional Slavic principles of word formation have largely fallen into disuse. For example, the nominalisation suffix *-ost*, usually very productive in Slavic – cf. Croatian *mladost* ‘youth’ from *mladi* ‘young’ – has completely disappeared in Molise Slavic. Terms for new concepts are usually not derived, but expressed through lexical borrowings, e.g. *džuvindu* ← Ital. *gioventù* ‘youth’. However, substantivized adjectives still exist, such as *one mlade* ‘the young’. On the other hand, traditional Slavic words have often extended their meaning along the lines of their polysemous equivalents in Italian, e.g. *jimat* ‘to have’ now also means ‘must, to have to’, which corresponds to the polysemy of Southern Italian *avé* ‘to have, must’.

The three Molise Slavic dialects differ both in terms of inherited vocabulary and borrowings, which makes any attempt to establish norms for a standard Molise Slavic language very difficult. Here are some examples, containing a word in the Acquaviva dialect and its equivalent in Montemitro: *pivac* vs. *galo* ‘cock’, *perja* vs. *pena* ‘feather’, *kobasca* vs. *salziča* ‘sausage’, *krela* vs. *lete* ‘wing’, *skoknit* vs. *cumbat* ‘to jump’, *usta* vs. *guandže* ‘mouth’, *hartina* vs. *tupanara* ‘mole’, *sakata* vs. *vriča* ‘sack’, *pickanara* vs. *tocmarin* ‘rosemary’, *čič* vs. *grah* ‘chickpea’, *tata* vs. *otac* ‘father’, *nòna* or *mamma* vs. *marèla* ‘grandmother’, etc. Sometimes the ‘deviant’ terms are even unknown in the other village; for these and the following examples see BREU (2017b: 202).

San Felice, which is geographically located between Acquaviva and Montemitro, sometimes has one form and sometimes the other, albeit with its own pronunciation, such as *kobasica*, *justa* but *otac*, *marèla*, *grah*. However, the San Felice dialect also has formations of its own such as *mamuča*, a secondary term for grandmother, *zvaterit* ‘to close’ as opposed to *zatvorit* in the other two dialects, or *fináč* ‘fennel’ vs. *kromač* (Acquaviva), *pajiz* ‘field’ vs. *largo* (Montemitro) and *njiva* (Acquaviva). In some cases, corresponding words have different meanings, such as *bak* ‘bull’ in Acquaviva, which in Montemitro additionally means ‘pig’ and ‘winter tomato’. A systematic study of the dialectal differentiation of the Molise Slavic vocabulary is still in progress.

With regard to inflected parts of speech, the integration of lexical borrowings normally follows fixed rules, which in the case of nouns are based on the gender of the source word and its final sound, e.g. *ospite* M ‘guest’ → *ospit* M, *intenzione* F ‘intention’ → *ndendzijuna* F, *mariuolo* M ‘thief’ → *marijo* M, GEN *marijola*. In the case of verbs, the integration of the four Italian conjugation classes affects only two Molise Slavic classes, with *-are* → class *-a*, but *-ire*, *-ére*, *-ěre* → class *-i*. Romance verbs are completely integrated into the Slavic aspectual system, to the extent that terminative (telic) verbs are without exception integrated as perfective verbs and then internally form imperfective partner verbs with the help of an imperfectivizing suffix, e.g. *decidere* → *decidit* (perfective) ⇒ *decidivat* (imperfective); on the principles of the integration of borrowings see BREU (2017a: 63–67).

Of particular interest is the triple number system, consisting of traditional Slavic numbers (1-4; optionally: 5-10, 100), integrated local Romance numbers and Italian ones. The use of these parallel number groups is only partly free. The choice often depends on well-defined noun classes (BREU 2015).

## 5. Phonetics and phonology

As far as the segmental phonology of Molise Slavic is concerned, the traditional consonant system is completely preserved. The coincidence of *ć* [tɕ] < *tj* with *č* [tʃ], observed in this micro-language, is probably already due to the area of origin, just like the separate treatment of *\*jt*, which, in contrast to Serbo-Croatian standards, is realised in SLM not as *ć* (or *č*) but as *kj* [c], e.g. Croatian *poći* < *\*pojti* vs. MSL *pokj* ‘to go’ INF.

The reduction of short vowels at the end of words to whispered (voiceless) vowels with a tendency to total loss can be attributed to language contact, since local Romance dialects also show a reduction of final vowels. Long vowels were subsequently reduced to short ones (internal development). Despite the existence of double consonants in the contact varieties, they do not attain phonemic status in SLM, not even in borrowings. In cases where they occur phonetically, they are optional, e.g. *tun(n)a* ‘all’ ← *tunno* ‘round’ (Ital. *tondo*). On the other hand, the two vowel phonemes *è* [ɛ] and *ò* [ɔ] were transferred into Molise Slavic via loanwords such as *kafè* ‘coffee’ ← *caffè*, *dòp* ‘after’ ← *dopo*.

Unlike the conservative dialect of Montemitro, Acquaviva and San Felice show the phenomenon of *Akanje*, i.e. the above-mentioned development of unstressed short *-o* and *-e* in *-a*, probably also due to language contact (BREU 1999).

In Molise Slavic a distinctive tone system has been preserved. In the texts published here, in contrast to the normal descending tone (’), the rising tone is marked in the phonetic transcription by an acute accent sign. It is usually realised as a double accent that is distributed over the acute-marked vowel and the following one, e.g. *kupit* [’kupit] ‘to accumulate’ INF vs. [kúpit] ‘to buy’ INF. Vowel length is also a distinctive property of the suprasegmental phonological system, e.g. *kupim* [’kupim] ‘accumulate’ PRS.1SG vs. [’ku:pim] ‘buy’ PRS.1SG.



Unlike in the Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian standard languages, rising accent is found also on the (lengthened) vowels of final syllables, even in the case of monosyllabic words. This is due to the optional loss of original short final vowels, having become voiceless, and especially the loss of final short *-i*; see, for example, the minimal pair *nos* ['no:s] 'nose' NOM.SG : [nó:s] 'to carry' IMP.2SG < \*[nósi]. On the orthographic and the phonological system of Molise Slavic see BREU (2017a: 16–21).

## 6. Contact-induced change in Molise Slavic grammar

The influence of its contact varieties is so evident in Molise Slavic grammar that one could speak of a 'Romance structure in Slavic form'. A grammatical description based on the PANGLOSS texts published here (EuroSlav 2010) can be found in BREU (2017a: 22–67), with further comments directly in the appendix to each text and particular emphasis put on contact phenomena. The most important cases in this area are summarized in the following referenced topics (BREU 2017a: 71–72):

### Nominal System (Gender, declination, case, definiteness, comparison)

- Loss of the neuter of nouns and development of an impersonal neuter, alongside the preservation of the neuter in pronouns and adjectives agreeing with them? (BREU 2013: 86–90).
- Restructuring of the gender of ex-feminines of the *i*-declination by adapting to the gender of their Italian equivalents (BREU 2004: 37–39; 2013: 94–99)
- Loss of the opposition of “place” and “motion to place” as a consequence of the coincidence of the ex-locative with other cases (BREU 2008; 2018a; 2018b)
- Optional extension of the genitive with the preposition *do* ‘of’ as well as an obligatory preposition *s* ‘with’ in the instrumental of action (BREU 1996: 26–28).
- Development of an article system by means of the grammaticalisation of an indefinite article as opposed to the zero article as the means of expression of definiteness (BREU 2008b; 2012)
- Conversion of the synthetic comparative into an analytical one of the Romance “*more* + positive” type, with the adoption of the possibility of expressing adjectival comparatives adverbially, and the reduction of the suppletives to the Italian level (BREU 2009a)

### Verbal system (tense, mood, aspect, voice)

- Formation of a de-obligative future with *jimat* ‘to have, must’ as auxiliary, in modal opposition to the future of probability with *tit* ‘to want’ as auxiliary (MARRA 2005; BREU 2011: 154, 156–158; BREU & PILA 2018; 2020)



- Formation of a “future in the past” and copying of the Romance tense agreement (BREU 2011: 155–156; BREU & PILA 2018; 2020)
- Development of a counterfactual imperfect as a competitor to the traditional *bi*-conditional (BREU 2014: 340–343)
- Development of a morphosyntactic aspect opposition “imperfect : perfect” as a consequence of the loss of the aorist, according to a Romance diachronic constant that contradicts the overall Slavic development in the domain of these aspecto-temporal grammemes; dominance of the morphosyntactic opposition over the (traditionally Slavic) derivative aspectual opposition of “perfective : imperfective”; e.g. the imperfective perfect can never replace the imperfect, neither in its processive function, nor in its iterative and counterfactual functions (BREU 2003b; 2006; 2014)
- Emergence of the processive and imminentive aspectual periphrases, syntactically calqued on Romance patterns (BREU 2011: 171–172; BREU, BERGHAUS & SCHOLZE 2016: 108–109)
- Preservation and high productivity of the pluperfect; typologically interesting is the mode of expression through a particle of participial origin embedded in the auxiliary of the perfect (BREU 2011: 161–162; 2017: 56)
- Restructuring of the participial and reflexive passive and contact-induced development of a venitive passive (BREU & MAKAROVA 2019; BREU 2020a)

#### **Syntactic adaptation** (clitics, word order, doubling, etc.).

- Replacement of the *Wackernagel* position of the clitics (as the second word in the sentence) with the circumverbal position (BREU 2019a: 415–420)
- Postposition of attributes as opposed to pre-position, resulting in an opposition of contrastive vs. decorative function (Breu 2019a: 416–417)
- Doubling of stressed pronouns with the help of clitics, according to the Southern Italian model (BREU 2019a: 423–425)
- Optional adaptation of double negation to the norms of standard Italian (BREU 2019a: 420–423)
- Transformation of local relative clauses into prepositional phrases with the secondary preposition *di* ‘where’ + NOM according to local patterns (BREU 1996: 36–37)
- Complementation by the conjunction *ke ~ ka* borrowed from Italian *che* ‘that’ (PICCOLI 2005; BREU forthcoming)
- Relative clauses with the relative particle *ke ~ ka* borrowed from Italian *che* ‘that’ (BREU 2019b)
- Use of particles and pronouns to express partitivity, among other things, due to the alleged (but contestable) borrowing of the Italian partitive particle *ne* (BREU 2020b)

In principle, grammatical influence occurs only at the functional level, i.e. without the borrowing of grammatical morphemes. Only in the case of conjunctions and particles, which could also be attributed to the grammatical domain, is material borrowing observed. The basis of these developments are “the adaptation of the semantic structure” (contact-induced meaning extension, semantic calque) and “syntactic calque”. In some cases, even the preservation of an otherwise unproductive form in Slavic can be seen as a result of language contact (pluperfect, imperfect).<sup>1</sup>

Despite its undoubtedly conservative elements, such as the preservation of a (reduced) case system, of the imperfect and pluperfect, of the paucal (BREU 2020, online 2) as well as of a volitional future, today’s Molise Slavic is in many points structurally closer to Italian than to standard Croatian. However, it is not simply a mixture with a greater or lesser degree of accordance with the one side or the other. Instead, a properly Molise Slavic grammatical system with independent and consolidated structures has established itself.

## 7. Literary documentation in Molise Slavic

As mentioned above, Molise Slavic is still used almost exclusively as an oral language. Exceptions to this are the occasional bilingual texts of local administrations (signposts and official forms) and attempts by individuals to form a literary language.



**Photo 1: Bilingual signpost in the dialect of Acquaviva Collecroce (W. Breu)**

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<sup>1</sup> On the question of the evaluation of conservation, non-introduction, loss and addition of grammatical differentiations against the background of conservativeness and progressiveness in situations of language contact, see BREU (1994: 58–62). The Molise Slavic imperfect is affected by language contact in two ways, namely by means of its preservation in itself and through its relation to the aorist in the aforementioned substitution of the Slavic diachronic constant in this field by the Romance one.

They are basically limited to the respective dialect, without any tendency to establish a common standard, which poses problems of general acceptance, especially because of the different attitude to *Akanje* and some morphological and lexical peculiarities. Apart from this, general “illiteracy” in the minority language hinders the existence of a large number of readers already within the individual villages. Recent literary production is treated separately in Part II of this article, which refers to the specific dialect concerned; for a comprehensive presentation see BREU (2017b).

Molise Slavic (*молізско-славянський*) has been counted among the so-called “literary micro-languages” since DULIČENKO (1981) included it in his overview of Slavic micro-languages. In BREU (2018c) some examples from the early period of the written documentation of Molise Slavic in the 19th century were analysed, in particular passages from the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* and the Molise Slavic translation of a novella from Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. Nominally, the Acquaviva dialect was used as a basis, but Dalmatian Slavisms, as well as free inventions ultimately led to artificial products in a language that had little to do with the current linguistic structure of the minority language. For today’s speakers of all three villages, these documents are completely incomprehensible, just as they probably were for the Slavs of Molise in the 19th century. A few literary attempts by foreigners (mostly Croats) did not improve the situation during that period.

## Part II

### Characteristics of the *Na-Našo* dialect of Montemitro<sup>2</sup>

The differences between the Molise Slavic dialects in the lexicon have already been dealt with in Part I of this presentation. Here we will limit ourselves to some grammatical peculiarities, namely the morphology of the DAT.SG.F, the distribution of the two modal futures and the imperfectivizing suffix. In addition, we will deal with the attempts to start a literary production in this dialect, for most of which, unlike Acquaviva (and the PANGLOSS corpus), the standardisation of the orthography according to the dictionary of PICCOLI & SAMMARTINO (2000) applies, published half a year after that of BREU & PICCOLI (2000), and the grammar of SAMMARTINO (2005). The percentage of foreign words in the PANGLOSS corpus, which for Montemitro amounts to 25.3% in total and to 49.8% for nouns, differs little from the average indicated above for Molise Slavic texts as a whole (BREU 2017a: 69–70). Thus, the relatively higher linguistic

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<sup>2</sup> Behind the glottonym *Na-Našo*, used exclusively in Montemitro (instead of *Na-Našu* in the other two dialects), the adverbialisation of the originally locative construction *na našu* (*manjeru*) ‘in our (way)’ may be presumed, typical of this dialect also in other cases, e.g. *pokj na vodo* ‘to go for water’ instead of the accusative *na vodu* used in the other dialects in this expression; cf. BREU (2008: 74). Otherwise, besides *zlav* ‘Slavic’ (and the neologism *kroat*), the glottonym of the Molise Slavic micro-language is also here simply *Naš Jezik* ‘our language’.

fidelity in this village, compared to the other two, has not slowed down the influx of lexical borrowings; indeed, as far as the PANGLOSS corpus is concerned, their percentage in Montemitro is even slightly higher than in the other two villages.



**Photo 2: Bilingual signpost (with strong adaptation to Croatian) in Montemitro (W. Breu)**

### **Extracts from the grammar of the Montemitro dialect**

The form of the DAT.SG.F in the Montemitro dialect derives directly from the corresponding traditional ending *-i*. However, according to the diachronic phonological rule of the loss of the short *-i* in world final position, this historical ending of the DAT.SG.F has turned into *-Ø* (zero), in contrast to the original ending being preserved in San Felice and the ending *-u* in Acquaviva, going back to a merger with the accusative form. Examples for Montemitro are: *ženØ* ‘woman’, *materØ* ‘mother’ DAT.SG.F from *žena* ‘woman’, *mat* ‘mother’. In Montemitro, unlike the other two dialects, this form also applies to the expression of “place” and “motion in place” as the original functions of the locative and accusative respectively. This is only true for the *a*-declension, otherwise these two functions are expressed by the accusative in Montemitro, which in Acquaviva and San Felice is the exclusive case for these functions in all declensions (BREU 2008; 2018a; 2018b).

In Montemitro, the modal opposition between the de-obligative (necessitive) future and the future of probability, although both forms are found here, too, has developed much less coherently than in Acquaviva. Here the traditional volitive simple future with the present clitic of *tit* ‘to want’ as an auxiliary expresses both functions, while for the future in the past, the construction with the clitic

imperfect of *jimat* ‘to have, must’ is the only option. Thus, the form with the present of the auxiliary *jimat* is restricted almost exclusively to its original deontic function, whereas in the past no new modal future was formed by means of the analogical formation of a clitic imperfect of *tit* ‘to want’ as an auxiliary as was the case in Acquaviva. As a consequence, there is only one future in Montemitro, which is expressed as a simple future by means of the construction of the type *ču pokj* ‘to go’ FUT.1SG and as a future in the past through the new construction of the type *mahu pokj* FUT.PST.1SG, which corresponds to the deobligative future in the past of the Acquaviva dialect.

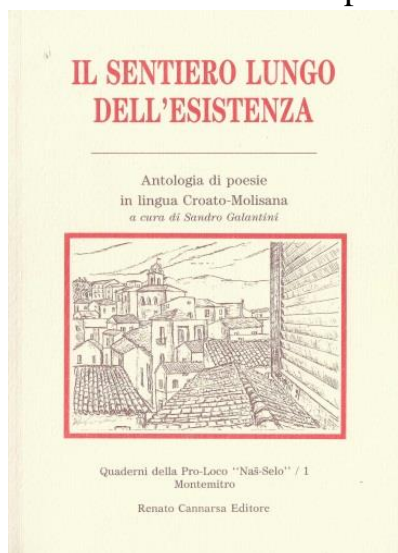
As a productive imperfectivizing suffix in Montemitro (and, with restrictions, in San Felice), in addition to the traditional *-iva*, the neologism *-ilja* is used, e.g. *busat* ‘to push’ PFV => *busivat* IPFV, but *kupit* ‘to buy’ PFV => *kupiljat* IPFV.

### Literary works in the dialect of Montemitro

The first literary works written in Montemitro in the 1990s preceded those published in the Acquaviva dialect. Literary production in this village is in principle limited to poems and short stories, while there is no equivalent to the novels of Nicola GLIOSCA from Acquaviva. Not all the texts published in Montemitro can be presented here; see for a more extensive illustration BREU (2017b: 208–211). With regard to the form of the texts one immediately notices the lack of *Akanje*, i.e. unstressed *-o* and *-e* remain unaltered in all positions, in contrast to the dialects of Acquaviva and San Felice.

The first booklet of poetry was the bilingual anthology by Sandro GALANTINI, *Il sentiero lungo dell’esistenza* ‘The long way of existence’ (Vasto: Renato Cannarsa Editore 1991). Here, as in all of Montemitro’s subsequent literary works, only the local *Na-Našo* dialect is used. The conservative pronunciation of vowels in Montemitro, especially the lack of *Akanje*, has led to the assumption that Molise Slavic, or its “Croatian” character, has been preserved to the highest degree in Montemitro. According to the speakers of Montemitro, there could therefore be no reason to approach the other two dialects. Rather, occasional Croatianisms are accepted, just like in the signposts of this village; see Photo 2

above. As a linguistic example see the first part of a poem by M. GIORGETTA, published in this volume (p. 24):



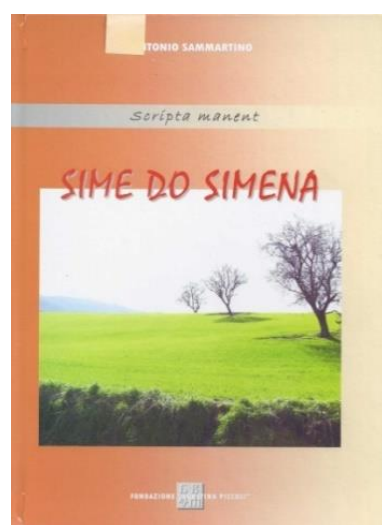
#### JENA PLAČ

*Te kosta koko malo su živil  
ma one oč koko stvari su vidil,  
one noge koko puta su činil,  
te brižne ruke su žel toko žita,  
ta čelo koko pota je hita  
za tvoja hiža moć bit sita.*



This first collection published in Montemitro found its successors in the anthologies *S našimi riči* ‘With our words’ edited by Antonio SAMMARTINO (Montemitro: ‘Agostina Piccoli’ Foundation 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016). They are the result of local competitions for the best poems in Molise Slavic. Although the texts published here come in part also from the other two villages, and include some short stories, they are a clear indicator that the emergence of local literature in Montemitro is strongly linked to poetry.

Less typical, but still to be addressed as important steps in the formation of a Molise Slavic literary variant in the dialect of Montemitro, are some more technical publications. They are linked to the name of Antonio SAMMARTINO, too. For example, in his richly illustrated volume *Sime do simena* ‘The seed from the seed’ (Montemitro: Fondazione ‘Agostina Piccoli’ 2006), the author describes the agricultural tools and work of the past. Here is a short example from this book (p. 16–17):



#### ČELJADE

...Ruke oš ledja  
bolahu večer.  
Dica se šalahu  
na ni guvno,  
hi gledahu,  
mi biše čuda udno.

It is worth noting that the online publication *Riča živa* ‘Living Word’ has been published in Montemitro for many years, with several annual issues.<sup>3</sup> In addition to texts in Italian and standard Croatian, it also contains texts in the Montemitro dialect. It is not clear to what extent the *Na-Našo* part of this journal (just like other written documents) is read by the non-expert population, i.e. the non-intellectuals, since even in Montemitro with its relatively high degree of language fidelity most of those interviewed on the spot admitted not to be able to

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, its traditional website [http://www.mundimitar.it/fap/rica\\_ziva/rica\\_ziva.hr.htm](http://www.mundimitar.it/fap/rica_ziva/rica_ziva.hr.htm) seems to be no longer accessible. It is, however, possible to find editions of this journal via <https://www.sites.google.com/site/ricaziva/> and by a Google search.

read *Na-Našo*. Nevertheless, this is a commendable attempt at keeping Montemitro's Molise Slavic online and thus also at contributing to its survival as a written language.



**Photo 3: Panorama of Montemitro (W. Breu)**

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