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THE DIALECTS OF MACEDONIA AND MONTENEGRO: RANDOM
LINGUISTIC PARALLELS OR EVIDENCE OF A SPRACHBUND?

Linguists of many nationalities have described the peculiarities of the Balkan linguistic community, or the so-called Balkan Sprachbund. This Sprachbund usually includes the languages and dialects of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Southeastern Serbia, Albania, Romania, and Greece.¹ However, not all linguists have agreed on the precise boundaries of a Balkan speech territory. Most of the debates have centered on the boundary between "Balkan South Slavic" and "non-Balkan South Slavic." Birnbaum (1965:59) considers the Slavic dialects of these areas to be "full members" ("Vollmitglieder") of the Balkan Sprachbund, and considers the non-Torlak Serbian dialects to be partial members of the Sprachbund.² In a previous study (Greenberg (1994), I discussed some Balkanisms, which extend beyond the traditional Balkan Slavic speech territory. In that study, I focused primarily on appellative forms. My further research has shown that several additional features support the thesis presented in the earlier paper on the existence of southwest Balkan speech community, which would be a subset of the broader Balkan Sprachbund. Such a Southwest area would include dialects of Western Macedonia, Albania, and Southeastern Montenegro. I suggest that the parallels, especially among the Slavic dialects in this area are not random phenomena, but evidence of prolonged linguistic contact. Such a claim, therefore, would extend the understand-

¹ For just a few of the works on the subject, cf. Sandfeld 1930, Belić 1936, Friedman 1983, Banfi 1985, Asenova 1989, Reiter 1994 .

² Most of the scholars who research the Balkan characteristics of the South Slavic dialects have considered the geographic areas where Macedonian, Bulgarian and Serbian Torlak dialects are spoken. Alexander (1984-1985) defines "South Slavic" in terms of diachronic linguistics, while for her "Balkan Slavic" refers to the realm of areal linguistics (cf. Alexander, Schallert, Friedman, Golab, and others).

ing of a Balkan Sprachbund to the Štokavian dialects spoken in Southeastern Montenegro and the Sandžak.

In earlier studies, linguists have described several key linguistic features, which extend from the traditional Balkan speech territory into Montenegro (cf. Ivić 1956, Belyavski-Frank 1983, Pešikan 1984, and Greenberg 1994). In Table 1 below, I have grouped these features in three categories: (1) features limited to a narrower Southwest Balkan speech territory; (2) features shared by the Montenegrin dialects and other East South Slavic (Balkan) dialects; and (3) features shared with other non-Slavic Balkan languages.

Table 1: Balkanisms in Montenegro and Sandžak Dialects

- A. Features limited to Macedonian and Montenegrin (Zeta-Lovćen) Dialects (1)
- Phonology
Tendency to retract the accent from open final syllables
- (2) Pronouns
- a. first and second person plural clitic pronouns differentiated: (dat.) ni, vi vs. (acc.) ne, ve
 - b. Use of third person sing. synthetic dative pronouns (e.g. njemu)
- (3) Verb Morphology and derivation
-uva- suffix used for iteratives
- B. East South Slavic Features
- (3) Phonology
- a. Tendency to eliminate pitch accent
 - b. Epenthetic lj does not develop from labial _ + j sequences
- (4) Verb Morphology
- a. 3. pl. aorist endings in -hu
 - b. End-stress in the 2./3. aorist
 - c. Forms of the aorist and imperfect are productive
- C. Broader Balkan features
- (5) Phonology
Devoicing of final consonants
- (6) Morphology and syntax
- a. Analytic forms for comparative adjectives
 - b. Strong tendency towards case syncretism

- c. Future-in-the-past (e.g., Mrkovići *ćaše doći*)
- d. Infinitive replacement
- e. Confirmative vs. non-confirmative distinctions
- f. Use of the possessive dative
- g. Admirative forms

The features shown in Table 1 are most productive in the Zeta-Lovćen old Štokavian dialects, especially in the southern and southeastern dialect points, i.e., those dialects, which have come into prolonged contact with Albanian. Phonologically, the virtual neutralization of pitch accent distinctions, for instance, is documented for the dialect of Mrkovići, which admits only two “accents” — long falling and short falling. Hence, in this dialect point, the rising/falling opposition is neutralized, and only length distinctions are phonologized. Moreover, in the entire Zeta-Lovćen dialect area, while final stressed syllables are allowed, in many instances they are retracted, especially to a previous short syllable (e.g., *sèstra* ‘sister’).

The admirative and non-confirmative forms in some Zeta-Lovćen dialects are rendered by the participle without an auxiliary for third person forms,³ e.g. (Novi Pazar/Sjenica), *Umro Vukosav, umro! Kad umro? Kako umro? To ne može bit kad sam ga video pre 2 sata zdrava* ‘Vukosav died! When did he die? How did he die? It can’t be, as I saw him healthy just 2 hours ago!’ (Barjaktarević 1966:134).⁴

While the above features have been covered in detail in previous studies, in the remaining section of this paper, I would like to present additional features, which correspond to those listed under A in Table 1, i.e., narrower Southwest Balkan features previously largely neglected in the literature. Once again, I classify these features in terms of phonological, morphological, and syntactic characteristics.

Common Phonological Features

In the Southwest Balkan speech area, I have identified the following two phonological features shared by Montenegrin, Macedonian, Arumanian, and Albanian dialects:⁵

³ I have not found second person admirative/non-confirmatives in the Zeta-Lovćen dialect studies. It would be perhaps a worthwhile subject of future field work research. It would also be of great interest to study the speech of Montenegrins living in Northern Albania.

⁴ According to Barjaktarević, such forms denoting surprise were also found in Piva/Drobnjak in Northwest Montenegro.

⁵ In this paper, I present only examples from the Southeast Montenegrin and Western Macedonian dialects. For the remaining sections of the paper, I use the following abbrevia-

(1) the development of *l*, *l'*; and (2) the rise of the phoneme *dz*. The proliferation of various non-standard pronunciations of *l* is found most prominently in the dialects that have come into contact with Albanian, which admits a dark *l* and a clear *l*. Otherwise, the clear *l* is often interpreted in the Slavic dialects as a combination of *l* + *j* or a palatal *lj* (1b). In some of the Slavic dialect material the dark *l* is rendered by a velar *l* (1b). Otherwise, the Slavic dialects lose palatal *lj*, replacing it with a dark *l* (1c). The phoneme *dz* may have arisen in all these dialects from a Romance substratum (2). Examples of these phenomena include:

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|------|------|------------------|-------------|
| (1a) | (NP) | <i>misljit</i> | 'to think' |
| | (MR) | <i>cipelje</i> | 'shoes' |
| | (GA) | <i>mol'iš</i> | |
| (1b) | (NP) | <i>słama</i> | 'straw' |
| | (MR) | <i>mogiła</i> | 'grave' |
| | (GA) | <i>gława</i> | 'head' |
| (1c) | (MR) | <i>kluč</i> | 'key' |
| | | <i>prijatelj</i> | 'friend' |
| | (KI) | <i>kluč</i> | 'key' |
| | | <i>košula</i> | 'shirt' |
| (2) | (MR) | <i>dzeleno</i> | 'green' |
| | | <i>dzubi</i> | 'teeth' |
| | (NP) | <i>jedzero</i> | 'lake' |
| | | <i>bronzin</i> | 'bronze' |
| | (KI) | <i>dzvezda</i> | 'star' |
| | (OH) | <i>nodze</i> | 'legs/feet' |

Common Morphological Feature

The one morphological feature, I have discussed in a previous study (Greenberg 1996), involves the spread of the *-u* ending in the vocative for masculine nouns in both Western Macedonian (4a) and Southeastern Montenegrin/Sandžak (4b). Examples include:

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|------|------|----------------------|------------------|
| (4a) | (TE) | <i>zetu/zete</i> | 'brother-in-law' |
| | (KI) | <i>deveru/devere</i> | 'brother-in-law' |
| (4b) | (EM) | <i>narodu/narode</i> | 'people' |
| | | <i>izrodu/izrode</i> | 'freak, monster' |

tions to denote specific dialect points: Macedonia: OH — Ohrid; KI -Kičevo; TE — Tetovo. Montenegro: MR — Mrkovići; NP — Novi Pazar / Sjenica; GA — Galičnik.

Common Syntactic Features

I have identified three additional common syntactic features, which serve to unite the Zeta-Lovćen dialects with those of Western Macedonia. These features include the use of the past passive participle in the expression of a new perfect tense (5), the tendency to grammaticalize pronoun reduplication (6), and the frequent use of the narrative imperative (7).

- (5) (MR) Kuća-mu-je izgorela/izgoreta 'His house has burned down'
 (KI) Imat zboreno. 'They have said.'
 (OH) Imam dojdeno. 'I have come.'
 Ovde sum dojden. 'I've come here.'
- (6) (MR) Ujak mi e mene Bešir 'My uncle is Bešir'
 (KI) Bil kaj nimi, ama nego go ne našl. 'He's been to their place, but he didn't find him.'
- (7) (MR) *leto ćeraj grozdje, mesi vino i peci rakiju* 'All summer he tends the vines, makes wine and brews rakiya'
 (EM) On ti pročita ono pismo, pa odma napiši drugo. 'He read you that letter and immediately wrote another.'
 (GA) Toko edni izmini a drugi čekaj, se rasipuvat blagozinieto. 'So by the time some leave, and others wait, beauty is lost.'

Conclusion

The evidence from this paper suggests that from the earliest migrations of the Southern Slavs to the Southwest Balkans, the populations of today's Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia had been in prolonged linguistic contact. The numbers of similar features shared by the Montenegrin and Macedonian dialects are not simply parallel linguistic developments, but probably resulted from the existence of an uninterrupted Slavic speech continuum from Montenegro through the Sandžak, Northern Albania, and Kosovo to Western Macedonia. In this respect, the Vardar River, distinguishing Western and Eastern Macedonian dialects was a significant dividing line between "Southwest Balkan" and "Southeast Balkan." The political boundaries, which arose after the Second Balkan War played a major part in interrupting the Southwest Balkan speech continuum, and stymied further direct linguistic contacts between Montenegro and Macedonia.

In the next phase of this research, it would be worthwhile to examine the dialects spoken in Northern Albania. Such a study — of Albanian, Montenegrin, and Macedonian dialects — would most likely reveal further similarities and convergent tendencies. While such research was diffi-

cult to carry out during the latter half of the twentieth century, I would hope that a future Balkans without borders would once again allow for further research in this direction. The evidence I presented in this paper suggests that such a future research project could be rich in new data and lead to a clearer understanding of historical dialectology and contemporary Sprachbund phenomena in the Southwest Balkans.

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