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Torlak: Areal Embedding and Linguistic Characteristics¹

1. Introduction

The aim of this overview article is to serve as an introduction to the linguistics of Torlak—the Prizren-Timok dialect area in Serbia and the adjacent closely related dialects in Western Bulgaria and the northern part of North Macedonia. Torlak is an underinvestigated, generally less known, perplexing, changing, controversially interpreted and perceived West South Slavic and Balkan Slavic linguistic variety, variative in space, divided by political borders and “roofed” by several standard languages. In this article, we present the current state of research on the main linguistic characteristics of Torlak, address the issues of South Slavic and Balkan language variation in time and space as well as the objective differentiation among dialects along the border area between Serbia and Bulgaria. The focus of the paper is on the presumable genealogical uniformity of Torlak, and a qualitative approach is used overall to describe the relevant features.² Unlike previous studies on Torlak, which are either focused on isolated linguistic (groups of) features in this dialect area or concentrated on the thorough and detailed

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² In this article the IPA transcription is used with the purpose of eliminating formal differences between national dialectological traditions and in order to make the data accessible to a larger audience. The following abbreviations are used: M—masculine, F—feminine, N—neuter, Sg—singular, Pl—plural, Def—definite, Indef—indefinite, Dem—demonstrative, Nom—Nominative, Acc—Accusative, Dat—Dative, Obl—oblique, 1—first person, 3—third person, Prs—present, Aor—aorist, Ipf—imperfect, Part—past participle, Neg—negation, refl—reflexive.

analyses of numerous dialectological features in a particular area or village, this article attempts to provide a concise overview of all the relevant linguistic features across the two sectors of the Torlak area, namely Eastern Serbia and Western Bulgaria. In addition, we intend to fill the gaps in certain linguistic/dialectological descriptions as well as to emphasize future research desiderata.

Section 2, based mainly on previous research, provides the reader with an overview of the main linguistic features which can help characterize the Torlak dialect area and place it among South Slavic and Balkan Slavic linguistic varieties. Linguistic geography (areal linguistics) is used for clarification of the position of Torlak, considering its multi-faceted interaction with historical, political, and sociolinguistic factors. In Section 3, methods of descriptive, comparative-historical, and structuralist dialectology allow us to present the variative features of Torlak in the form of a concise grammar based on the data from Eastern Serbia and Western Bulgaria and to emphasize the understudied properties. Rare and underinvestigated Torlak data are presented. The Torlak varieties spoken in the northern part of North Macedonia, or in the southern parts of Serbia, are exemplified only for the purpose of linguistic comparisons; the same holds for those varieties that Torlak borders with.³ The concluding remarks are presented in Section 4.

2. Areal Embedding of Torlak in the South Slavic and Balkan Landscape

This section summarizes previous research on the boundaries of Torlak and addresses the major factors causing the recent divergence within it.

2.1. The Boundaries of Torlak

What makes the Torlak dialect area unique in terms of its taxonomic position in the group of Slavic languages and dialects is the essentially different nature of its two linguistic boundaries—the eastern and the southern, on the one hand, and the north-west-

³ For details on other Torlak varieties the interested reader is referred to Ivić 1956; Peco 1991; Brozović, Ivić 1998; Vidoeski 1999; Jurišić 2009; Labroska et al. 2012; Mladenović 2004; 2010; 2013, among others.

ern, on the other. The eastern and southern boundaries are defined genealogically, based on the clusters of historical-phonetic and morphological isoglosses, whereas the north-western boundary is areal-typological. The sociolinguistically unique character of Torlak is influenced by the fact that its speakers belong to several South Slavic nations of different denominations, by the presence of political borders parting its territory, by the “roofing” (Germ. *Überdachung*) by several Slavic standard languages and by different language, culture, and education policies in different countries. Three sectors of Torlak, the Serbian, Bulgarian, and the Macedonian areas, should be singled out; the Serbian sector is usually called the “Prizren-Timok dialect area.” Despite the fact that it is not practical to contrast the terms “language” and “dialect” in linguistics (cf. Sobolev 2014a on Slavic), the linguonym Torlak in its broadest sense (cf. Sikimić et al., this volume) refers to a taxonomically lower linguistic unit than the generally recognized South Slavic languages such as Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, and others.

From the point of view of linguistic geography (areal linguistics), Torlak is most clearly and unequivocally demarcated in the east, where numerous genealogical isoglosses run along the “Ivić-line” in Western Bulgaria, opposing the South Slavic west to the South Slavic east (Ivić 1956, 35–41; Kočev 2001; Tetovska-Troeva 2016). These include:⁴ West **tj* in *leŷa* ~ East *leŷta* ‘lentils’; **dj* in *međa* ~ *mežda* ‘boundary, border’; **q* in *ruka* ~ *raka*, *rəka* ‘arm’ and in the verb suffix **nq* in *sednu*.Aor.Sg ~ *sedna* ‘sat’; **ʷ* in *zəlvə* ~ *zŷva*, *zəlvə*, *zolvə* ‘sister-in-law’ and in the active participle in *-l mogəl* ~ *možel* ‘could’; **ʷ* in *ləko* ~ *leko* ‘easy’; **r* in *pŷsten* ~ *prəsten* ‘ring’; **n* in *ogəŋ* ~ *ogən* ‘fire’; **j* in *jesen* ~ *esen* ‘autumn’; **tʷj* in *gosje*, *gosti* ~ *goskʷe*

⁴ Due to the lack of space, only a few examples are provided without exact or full references to the aforementioned sources. The Timok data in this section comes from Stanojević 1911 and Sobolev 1998, and it is complemented by the data from the recent field research carried out in Eastern Serbia and Western Bulgaria within the projects *Guardians of the Intangible Heritage of the Timok Vernaculars*, 2015–2017, financed by the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia (see Ćirković 2018 for details), *Language, Folklore and Migrations in the Balkans* (financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia as well as *(Dis-)entangling Traditions in the Central Balkans: Performance and Perception* (TraCeBa project, 2018–2020), see footnote 1 for the funding information.

'guests'; **h* in *uo*, *uvo* ~ *ufe* 'ear'; **f* in *vurna* ~ *furna* 'bread furnace'; the plural nouns *ovcete* ~ *ovcite* 'sheep', *gosje* ~ *goste* 'guests'; the definite article forms in *volət* ~ *vola*, *volo* 'ox'; the forms of personal pronouns *nega* ~ *nego* M.3Sg and *ju*, *đzu* ~ *ja* F.3Sg; the presence ~ absence of gender oppositions in the plural; the verb forms *predu* ~ *preda(t)*, *predə(t)* 3Pl.Prs 'spin yarn'; the endings 3Pl.Ipf *-ofe*, *-feu*, *-u* ~ *-a*; *pado* ~ *padna* 1Sg.Aor 'fall', *pletofe* ~ *pletoa* Aor.3Pl 'knit', and *padla* ~ *padnala* *l*-part.F.Sg 'fall'. It is between this cluster of isoglosses and the old state border between Serbia and Bulgaria (existing prior to the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1919) that the Bulgarian Torlak sector is situated. The sharpness of the dialectal division in Western Bulgaria and the simultaneous existence of isoglosses of the 6th–7th (reflexes of **tj*, **dj*), 12th (reflexes of the jer-vowels), and 17th centuries (reflexes of *h*, minor analogical changes in morphology, and numerous lexicalized phenomena (see the evidence in detail in Sobolev 1998 I, 382–389) in it indicate that the current linguistic boundary was not established during the Slavs' settlement in the Balkan region, but highly likely in a relatively recent time—due to the migration of the West South Slavic population (and the spread of their dialect) from west to east.

In contrast to the delimitation in Western Bulgaria, the phenomena which place certain Macedonian dialects into the Torlak group (Vidoeski 1999, 26, 86–87, Map IV) include: **o* > *u* in the direct object case inflection of F. and M. nouns of the *a*-declension: *zenu* 'woman'; **l* > *lu* in the position after dentals: *dlugo* 'long'; the presence of the palatal phoneme /*λ*/: *po_λe* 'field'; the forms of the genitive-accusative in the adjectival-pronominal declension: *nega* 'him'; the inflection of the *a*-declension F. and M. plural noun forms *-e*: *zene* 'woman'; the inflection of the 1Pl.Prs *-mo*: *imamo* 'have'; the inflection of the 3Pl.Prs *-v*: (*oni*) *imav* '(they) have'; the inflection of the 1Pl.Aor *-smo*: *rekosmo* 'say'; the inflection of the 3Pl.Aor *-fe*: *reko_fe* 'say'. There is another cluster of isoglosses which passes somewhat further to the south from the first cluster: **o* > *u* in the root morphemes: *zubi* 'tooth.Pl'; the coincidence of the reflexes **ʋ* and **ɔ* in *ə*: *də_f* 'rain', *də_n* 'day'; **ʋ* > *u*: *uleze* 'come in'; **l* > *u* in: *vuk* 'wolf'.

The boundary between the Serbian sector of Torlak (i.e., the Prizren-Timok dialect area) and the Serbian Kosovo-Resava dialects to the west contrasts the *balkanized* South Slavic languages and dialects with those dialects which have retained the main

structural features of the inherited Pre-Balkan Slavic language system. Although genealogical classification of South Slavic languages places Torlak in the West South Slavic group together with the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian linguistic continuum, typological classification departs from the structural features and places Torlak in the Balkan Slavic group, i.e., the Slavic part of the Balkan Sprachbund together with Macedonian and Bulgarian (cf. Trubetzkoy 1928). Torlak varieties have undergone structural changes, diverging from other South Slavic languages and dialects, particularly in the domain of morphosyntax (Asenova 2002; Lindstedt 2000; Sobolev 2003; MDABYa 2005a; 2005b). The following shared features of the Balkan languages and dialects are typically recognized (Sandfeld 1930, 163–216; Friedman, Joseph 2019, 61): the schwa phoneme, the merger of the genitive and dative plus the use of dative pronouns as possessives (cf. Nomachi 2016), the postpositive definite article, the loss of the infinitive, the analytic future formed with ‘want’, the same form for ‘where’ and ‘whither’, the use of proleptic personal pronouns (including object reduplication), negative clauses followed by ‘and’ plus main clause and other paratactic constructions, and two direct objects (especially with ‘learn’ and ‘ask’). One of the core mechanisms underlying Balkan features is its analytism, which in Torlak represents an innovation in comparison to other South Slavic languages and dialects which have retained archaic, synthetic means of expressing various grammatical functions (Ivić 2002).

Dialectology in Bulgaria interprets Balkanisms in Torlak as unequivocal evidence of its belonging to the Bulgarian dialect continuum (Kočev 2001, Map 1). However, extensive studies of the north-western periphery of the Balkan Slavic languages and dialects (Cyxun 1981; Popov 1984; Sobolev 1991; Rakić-Milojković 1995; Miloradović 2003, among others) have shown that the issue to be discussed is not one of a clearly defined borderline where Balkanisms have spread, but rather a wide transitional zone where the Balkanization of local dialects and the groups to which they belong has occurred over the past and continues to partly occur in the present.

2.2. The Major Factors Causing Recent Divergence within Torlak

The maximal number of linguistic differences at a distance of 220 km can be found between the dialects in South Metohija, Šar Planina, and Dolni Polog, on the one hand, and those of Timok and Stara Planina in Eastern Serbia and Western Bulgaria, on the other. South-western dialects are characterized by intense, often *contact-induced innovations* in prosody, phonetics, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary, while north-eastern dialects retain archaisms.⁵ Although details of internal dialectal differentiation beyond the politically conditioned tripartition still have to be investigated, in order to better understand the interdialectal developments of Torlak varieties, the social and political circumstances regarding the *borders* between Serbia, Bulgaria and Northern Macedonia should be considered. For example, the major part of the region around the river Timok and its valley (with the town of Knjaževac as its administrative center) became part of the Principality of Serbia (Serb. *Kneževina Srbija*) in 1833 (Miličević 2012), almost half a century before the Congress of Berlin in 1878, which further changed the Serbian borders and included the rest of the Timok area and the Lužnica region to the south (with the towns of Ba-bušnica and Bela Palanka as its administrative center(s)). It is noteworthy that the Lužnica region was a Serbian-Bulgarian border area for a long time, and its most southern parts were officially under Bulgarian jurisdiction until 1918 (Šantić, Martinović 2007). These circumstances were one of the reasons for the divergent linguistic processes documented within Torlak varieties spoken in Eastern Serbia.

Under the *influence of standard South Slavic languages*, divergent processes have continued to develop further in this presumably genealogically uniform dialect area. For example, the Standard Serbian influence is reflected in the following elements, as attested in the speech of those speakers who are more exposed to the standard language through education, media, and owing to

⁵ In the phonological inventory alone a dozen divergent elements can be observed, most of which are triggered by the close contact of western dialects with non-Slavic Balkan languages: the presence of the phonemes /y/, /ε/, /ɔ/, /f/ and the neutralization /r/ ~ /ɔr/, /λ/ ~ /l/, /p/ ~ /n/, /tɕ/ ~ /tʃ/, /dʒ/ ~ /dʒ/.

their generally higher mobility and contacts: the mid-vowel schwa has been replaced by *a*: *dən* > *dan* ‘day’; syllabic *l* has been lost and substituted by *u*: *pɫn* > *pun* ‘full’, *dɫg* > *dug* ‘long’, *sɫza* > *suza* ‘tear’, *kɫne* > *kune* ‘to swear’; *h* and *f* have been introduced, *ǣz* has been lost and substituted by *z*: *ǣzvono* > *zvono* ‘bell’; the final *-l* has been replaced by *-o*: *bio.Part* ‘to be’; the definite article has been lost; the grammatical functions of a noun phrase are marked synthetically; the future tense is expressed by conjugated forms of the auxiliary verb; the infinitive is used. Under the Standard Bulgarian influence, the following (among other) elements have entered the dialect: new reflexes of nasal phonemes (*rəka* ‘arm’) and *yat* (*b’at* ‘white’), forms of personal pronouns (*az*.1Sg *Ŧ*, *nego*, *go* ‘him’), the ending of aorist and imperfect (1Pl *-hme*), etc.

3. The Linguistic Characteristics of Torlak

This section summarizes the main “base” features of Torlak. A grammar digest is provided, with special attention to the internal variation in this comprehensive dialect area.

3.1. Suprasegmental, Segmental, and Historical Phonetics

The studies of Torlak in previous research within the domain of articulatory phonetics, acoustics, and sociophonetics have not been conducted in a systemic way (cf. Broch 1903; 1910; Sudimac 2016; 2018). It is known that the accent is expiratory (stress accent), while qualitative and quantitative contrasts are lost (Lončar Raičević, Sudimac 2018). The accentuation systems of local dialects are understudied from a comparative point of view, with the exception of Alexander 1975. It is noteworthy that certain fundamental differences in stress distribution are attested among different Torlak varieties. In Western Bulgaria and Eastern Serbia the accent position entirely corresponds to that in late Proto-Slavic (*kqŋ*, *kqŋ’a*, *kqŋ’atoga* ‘horse’; *vod’a*, *v’odu*, *vod’utu* ‘water’; *ml’ada*, *mładz’ēja* ‘young, younger’; *moj’a*, *moj’u*, *moj’e* ‘my, mine’; *jed’an*, *jednog’a*, *jedn’i* ‘one’; *greb’emo*, *greb’ete*, *greb’eu*, *gr’ebla*, *gr’eben* ‘rake’), while numerous dialects in the western area are characterized by a fixed accent—that of the western Macedonian type.

The vowel system there includes the phoneme /ə/—*v’ə/ka* ‘louse’. The contrast /a/ ~ /ə/ is optionally neutralized in unstressed po-

sitions (*p'ovās* 'belt, waistband' ~ *tʃ'efal* 'comb'). The phoneme /ɾ/ has a syllabic function (*vɾ.Sg, vʀove.Pl* 'top'), and in numerous dialects in the eastern part of the territory also the phoneme /l/ (*pʌ.Sg, pʌ'love.Pl* 'rat'), whose phonemic status is not always clear and the exact acoustic characteristics of which are unknown. All dialects are characterized by assimilation, contraction, and vowel elisions, the rules of which are to a large extent individual. Unstressed vowels can undergo qualitative and complete quantitative reduction: *sti nik'ota* 'St. Nicholas'.

The variable pronunciation of /l/ to [ɫ] is attested in Metohija and Western Bulgaria. The sonants /λ/ and /ɲ/ can be realized without any positional restrictions as [l] and [n] in Western Bulgaria: *koni* 'horse'. The sonant /j/ has weakened articulation in numerous dialects, ranging from [j] to [j̥] and complete reduction: *ed'an* 'one'. The sonant character of /v/ is constantly perceived as a dialectism in the Macedonian and Bulgarian territories (*dejka tʃua-la outse* 'the girl grazed the sheep'), while in Serbian dialects, on the other hand, /v/ is considered to be a dialectal phenomenon when it has consonant characteristics (*svaref tʃorbu* 'I cooked broth').

The pronunciation of /tʃ/ and /dʒ/—with longer (in the west) or shorter friction (in the east) is highly variable and ranges from the middle affricates to palatal [c], [j], especially in northern North Macedonia, and to the phonemes [kʲ], [gʲ], particularly in Western Bulgaria. The consonant /f/ is absent in the vernaculars in Eastern Serbia and Western Bulgaria, but has been substituted in the old and new loanwords: *St'evan* 'Stephan' *vur'una* 'bread furnace'. The consonant /h/ is absent. The historic *h* has deteriorated or has been substituted (in Serbia: *streja* 'eaves', *suw* 'dry'). The exact substitution rules in both cases need to be investigated.

On part of the territory (Eastern Serbia and Western Bulgaria), the following combinations have disappeared: /ki/, /ke/, /gi/, /ge/, /jk/, /λk/, /ɲk/: *čip'i* 'boil', *j'abl'čee* 'apples', *dž'inu* 'perish', *bl'adže* 'sweet', *dev'ojčica* 'girl', *b'olčica* 'illness', *gr'anjčica* 'branch'. Many varieties are characterized by metathesis, as in *lojze* 'vineyard'. Lexemes of Slavic origin have experienced simplifications of the word final consonant clusters, e.g., *pɾs* 'finger'.

Reflexes of **tj*, **kti*, **dj* are single-phonemic, and clearly opposed to the Bulgarian /t, ʒd/, although in Torlak in Western Bulgaria the latter can be found in lexicalized forms such as *p'l'eška* 'shoulder' and *n'uʒda* 'need', or in grammaticalized verb forms such as

nao3dam ‘I find’ and *do3dam* ‘I come’. In Eastern Serbia the forms *dəʃter* ‘daughter’ and *də3devnik* ‘worm’ are lexicalized. Dentals develop a new (“second”) iotation (*br’at̃ca* ‘brothers’, *λ’ud̃ze* ‘people’), whereas labials do not (*sn’opje* ‘bundles, sheaves’, *gr’obje* ‘cemetery’). However, in Western Bulgaria the corresponding lexemes can be replaced by the standard ones (*brat’ia* ‘people’). By analogy, the group labial + λ has been lost in the passive participle forms: *k’upen* ‘bought’, *λ’uben* ‘kissed’, *sl’omen* ‘broken’, *sl’aven* ‘celebrated’. The initial groups **čr-*, **čr̃* became *t̃sr-*, *t̃sr̃*: *t̃sr’evo* ‘bowel’, but in Western Bulgaria the corresponding lexemes have been replaced by the standard ones: *t̃feren* ‘black’.

In Eastern Serbia and Western Bulgaria, the reflex of the Proto-Slavic nasal **ɔ* consistently gave *u* (*ruk’a* ‘arm’) in all types of morphemes. The only reflex of both jers (reduced semi-vowels) is *a*, but in the south and east of the territory it is often lexicalized: *vel’igden* ‘Easter’ and *jedinajes* ‘eleven’. The initial group **və* consistently gave *u* (*uzni ga* ‘take it!’), but cf. *vəʃka* ‘louse’. The Ekavian reflex of **ě* is consistent (*or’ej* ‘nut’, *nes’am* ~ *n’esam*.Sg ‘to be’ Neg.). Reflexes of the syllabic **l̥* vary from the complete and consistent retention of /*l̥*/ (in Western Bulgaria and parts of Eastern Serbia) through /*lə*/ after dentals and velars and /*u*/ after labials (in Eastern Serbia: *sl’ənt̃se* ‘sun’, but *vuk* ‘wolf’) to /*lu*/ after dentals in parts of Southern Serbia: *slunt̃se* ‘sun’.

3.2. Morphology and Morphosyntax

The morphology and morphosyntax have not been adequately studied in previous research and this overview attempts to fill this gap at least in some aspects and to name some of the most important research desiderata. Most of the phenomena listed below need to be studied from the areal and sociolinguistic perspective of the entire Torlak region.

Nouns of the prasl. **i*-declension are masculine in most of the dialects in the region (*k̃rv* ‘blood’), but there is also variation within the system (*taj*.Dem.M *not̃c* ‘that night’, *not̃tu* ~ *not̃tu*.Def.F ‘night’) as well as areal differences, which are sometimes lexicalized. The variability is very high in the plural noun affixes, e.g., *-i* ~ *-e*, *-ovi* ~ *-ove* (*sinovi* ~ *sinove* ‘sons’) or *gosje* ~ *gost̃ce* ‘guests’, especially in the neuter gender (*pilit̃fi* ~ *pilit̃ci* ~ *pileta* ‘chickens’).

In numerous dialects in Eastern Serbia syncretic paradigms of

declension have been formed, with singular forms expressed synthetically and plural ones analytically.

	Sg.	Pl.
Nom.	<i>žena</i>	<i>žene</i>
Acc.	<i>ženu</i>	<i>žene</i>
Dat.	<i>žene ~ ženi</i>	<i>na=žene</i>

Archaic dative forms were recorded by dialectologists in the middle of the 20th century (*premenu kupil babe*.Dat.Sg.Indef ‘(he) bought new clothes for (an) old woman’), although at the time analytism prevailed in expressing the indirect object (*a na=ženutu*.Obl.Sg.Def *dal i volove i bivoale* ‘and (he) gave oxen and buffaloes to the woman’).

The analytic case system is an innovation in Torlak and includes a reduction of the nominal system to two cases—the *general (direct) case* and *general oblique case* (Sobolev 2008). Analytic (prepositional) marking of grammatical functions is characteristic, for instance, of expressing the indirect object (Timok: *kaz’ala na b’abu* ‘(she) told grandmother’) and the possessor (Timok: *na moj’ega t’atu kum* ‘my father’s best man’) or expressing the comitative or instrument/means (Timok: *sas m’uza* ‘with husband’, *s k’ola* ‘by car’). The same type of marking holds for personal pronouns (Timok: *dad’u ti na t’ebe* ‘(they) give to you’). Analytic declension is attested in the varieties spoken in both Eastern Serbia (see Vuković et al., this volume) and Western Bulgaria. The vocative exists in the inventory of nominal forms: *svate ~ svatu* ‘wedding guest!’; *sine!* ‘son; daughter!’; *tsvet!* ‘Tsveta!’. The paucal forms are missing in some local varieties: *tri dni* ‘three days’; *dve deteti* ‘two children’.

In the varieties in Western Bulgaria and Eastern Serbia there is a tripartite postpositive article related to the forms of demonstrative pronouns (*ŕŕov’ekav, ŕŕov’ekat, ŕŕov’ekān, ŕŕov’etsive, ŕŕov’etsite, ŕŕov’etsine* ‘man’), cf. *detevo mi rove* ‘(this, close) child of mine cries’. Plural forms can vary: *bugareti ~ bugarete ~ bugareto* ‘Bulgarians’. It is not clear to what extent the morphemes *-v-* and *-n-* present the grammatical category of definiteness, and to what extent only deixis. In numerous dialects, there is only one article morpheme with the basis *-t-*. The boundary of the area with three articles has been defined in Sobolev 1998. In Torlak varieties in West Bulgaria, along the Ivić-line, the article in masculine singular forms varies:

-ət ~ -a (*matʃəkət* ~ *matʃəka* ‘cat’). It is also possible to use the article with personal names: *prvo dete mi je toj milata*.Def ‘my first child is this Mila’.

In the dialects of Timok-Stara Planina and Lužnica-Znepolje, and possibly others, the indefinite declension in the singular is opposed to the definite one (in the dative—usually or exclusively with a masculine noun in the singular form expressing the object, in folklore texts and fixed expressions).

	Timok		
	Indef.	Def.	
Nom.	<i>ʃov'ek</i> <i>ʒen'a</i>	~ ~	<i>ʃov'ekəv, ʃov'ekət, ʃov'ekən</i> <i>ʒen'ava, ʒen'ata, ʒen'ana</i>
Acc.	<i>ʃov'eka</i> <i>ʒen'u</i>	~ ~	<i>ʃov'ekavoga, ʃov'ekatoga, ʃov'ekanoga</i> <i>ʒen'uvu, ʒen'utu, ʒen'unu</i>

However, the functional rules of the definite article usage in the dialects of Eastern Serbia are unknown and have not been studied yet, cf. in the same text: (1) *ona se odma pretvori u zmiju_{indef}, a on zmijutu_{def} ubije* ‘She immediately turned into a snake, and he killed that snake’ and (2) *a ona se pretvori u ʃupriju_{indef} ... a kəd bil nasret ʃupriju_{indef}, ʃuprija_{indef} se strofi* ‘she turned into the bridge ... and when he was in the middle of the bridge, the bridge broke’ (Stanojević 1911). The reduplication of the definite direct and indirect object has not been observed very often in these dialects: *selaʃsi ubiju popatoga* ‘peasants killed the priest’, but cf. *kako vi ga*.3Sg.Acc *zovu deteto?* ‘what is the name of your child?’ (MDABYa 2005b: Map 38). The grammatical status of the “article morpheme” (the postpositive definite article vs. the suffixed demonstrative) is debatable; as in all Balkan languages, hypertrophic uses are also noted: *ovoj mojevo dete dojde* ‘this son of mine came’; *deʃa ləʒe tija startšət* ‘the children are deceiving that old man’ (Čirić 1983, 82; MDABYa 2005b, Map 96). See Vuković et al. in this volume for details on the variation in the use of the definite article.

The forms of personal pronouns vary to a high degree, e.g., 1.Pl *mi* ~ *mije* ~ *nije* ~ *ni*. Synthetic forms compete with analytic ones, but for some of them areal distribution is not established, cf. *nemu* ~ *na.nega* (see the general picture in Cyxun 1981). The inventory of short forms of personal pronouns is very diverse. Short forms of the dative are used for possessive meanings: *brada mu* ‘his beard’.

The short form of reflexive pronouns in the dative is frequent, but its distribution and functions have not been studied yet: *ona si urevi* ‘She speaks’; *sin si mi dojde* ‘my son has come’ (see Vuković et al., this volume).

In the dialects in Eastern Serbia the interrogative pronoun is homonymous with the relative animate pronoun (*koj* ‘who; which’). The system of demonstrative pronouns is three-membered (e.g., M.Sg and M.Pl *ov’aj* ~ *ov’ija*, *taj* ~ *t’ija*, *on’aj* ~ *on’ija*, N.Sg *ov’oj* ~ *ov’o*, *toj* ~ *tov’a*, *on’oj* ~ *on’o*). The interrogative inanimate pronoun is *kakv’o/kvo* ‘what’, with the negative and indefinite forms deriving from **čyto*. The general pronoun is *sav* ‘all, whole’.

The contrast between short and full forms of adjectives has been lost: *u petak velik* ‘on Good Friday’, *u posledən t̃i³as se spasija* ‘(he) saved himself at the last moment’. In those dialects with the remnants of the case system, adjectives are also inflected, and the ending is mostly retained in the adjectives derived from personal names in the singular: M. *m’ilana urdar’ovoga*, *l’ubetu bundar’ovomu*, F. *m’aru p’etrovu*, *m’itre milan’ovezi*.

The analytic comparative and superlative are formed by preposing the comparative and superlative particles *po-* or *naj-*. Typically, adjectives and adverbs are compared (*po d̃rt* ‘older’, *naj d̃rt* ‘the oldest’, *p’omlad od n’ega* ‘younger than him’, *n’ajmladi* ‘the youngest’; *p’o dal’eko* ‘further’), but the analytic comparative is also attested in other parts of speech, such as nouns (*p’o jun’ak* ‘a braver man’), pronouns (*po svoj* ‘a closer person’), verbs (*po t̃r̃i’i* ‘run faster’), and prepositions (*po do men* ‘closer to me’). Synthetic archaisms are also documented, usually as lexicalized forms: *uđ̃ze* ‘worse’, *n’ajmlad̃³eja* ‘the youngest’, *star’ei* ‘older’. Hybrid forms are also attested (*l’udi im’ali p’ovije* ‘people had more’). Analytic comparison is documented in varieties spoken in both Eastern Serbia and Western Bulgaria.

The adverbs formants in *-va* / *-ka* are noteworthy: *ovd’eva* ‘here’, *tud’eva* ‘there’, *ond’eva* ‘there’ ~ *ovd’eka*, *tud’eka*, *ond’eka*.

When it comes to verbs, paradigm patterns are provided below, although not for all conjugation types.

Present indicative of the verb 'bake' (Timok):

Sg.	Pl.
<i>peŋ'em</i>	<i>peŋ'emo</i>
<i>peŋ'eŋ</i>	<i>peŋ'ete</i>
<i>peŋ'e</i>	<i>peŋ'u</i>

In several dialects in Eastern Serbia, the ending *-u* is generalized in the indicative form of 3Pl.Pres: *n'osu* 'wear'. There is a high areal variability in simple preterit (imperfect) inflection forms, e.g., 1Pl: *imaomo* ~ *imajamo* ~ *imaŋ'emo* 'have'.

Imperfect indicative of the verbs 'bake' (Timok) and 'knit' (Belogradčik):

Timok		Belogradčik	
Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.
<i>peŋ'eo</i>	<i>peŋ'eomo</i>	<i>plet'eŋe</i>	<i>plet'eŋemo</i>
<i>peŋ'eŋe</i>	<i>peŋ'eoste</i>	<i>plet'eŋe</i>	<i>plet'eŋete</i>
<i>peŋ'eŋe</i>	<i>peŋ'eu / peŋ'eofe</i>	<i>plet'eŋe</i>	<i>plet'eŋeu / plet'eŋeu</i>

The aorist indicative of the verb 'become' (Timok):

Sg.	Pl.
<i>st'anu</i>	<i>stan'umo</i>
<i>st'anu</i>	<i>stan'uste</i>
<i>st'anu</i>	<i>stan'uŋe</i>

The restrictions on the formation of the imperfect from perfective verbs and the aorist from imperfective verbs have not been investigated, neither have the functions of the preterit. In particular, the aorist is possible with a future meaning: *beži, izede te kurjak!* 'Save yourself, the wolf will eat you!'.

The *l*-participle is of the type *stan'ul* 'became' in the main part of the territory and *stan'al* on the eastern and southern periphery, where a strong Bulgarian and Macedonian influence exists. There is variation as in *st'igal* ~ *stign'ul* 'reached, came'. The form of the 3Sg perfect is characterized by the omission of the auxiliary verb: *t'inutu z'ovnul km'etət* 'The village headman called Tina' (Vuković et al., this volume). In the main part of the territory, gender distinctions are retained in the plural forms of the perfect: *da bog da ti se govna jela* 'May the Lord make your litter edible!', and the same applies to the pluperfect: *deŋsa mu se joŋte ne bila dignula* 'His children have not got up yet'. In Western Bulgaria, gender distinctions

have been lost and the form of the *l*-participle is generalized to *-li* (*do/li zene* ‘the women came’). The negative form of the perfect is illustrated in *odavnōtjka nesəm tjetel knidzeve* ‘I haven’t read these books in a long time’.

The optative is homonymous with the perfect without the auxiliary verb: *zdrav bil!* ‘I wish you health!’.

The pluperfect is usually formed with the imperfect of the auxiliary verb: *poklali beofe goāza* ‘(they) had killed a lot’.

The conditional form is: *ifəl bi ja, ama si nemam dreje popovstce* ‘I would go, but I don’t have priestly clothes’. The imperative is: *st’ani!*, *stan’etel* ‘Stop!’. The following archaic forms *vidz* ‘look’, *jedz* ‘eat’, and *retf’i* ‘say’ are noteworthy. Prohibitive forms vary, e.g., in Timok: *nemoj me ubijef* ‘Do not kill me!’.

The analytic future tense is formed with the future tense marker, which represents the grammaticalized or only partially inflected form of the volitional verb **hvtēti* ‘want’ and a subjunctive-like construction consisting of the subjunctive (morphologically corresponding to the inflected form of the indicative present tense) optionally preceded by the particle *da*:

Future I of the verb ‘come’ (Timok):

<i>tju</i> / <i>tje</i> (<i>da</i>) <i>d’ojdem</i>	<i>tje</i> (<i>da</i>) <i>d’ojdemo</i>
<i>tje</i> (<i>da</i>) <i>d’ojdes</i>	<i>tje</i> (<i>da</i>) <i>d’ojdete</i>
<i>tje</i> (<i>da</i>) <i>d’ojde</i>	<i>tje</i> (<i>da</i>) <i>d’ojdu</i>

In addition to the *velle*-type of the future tense, the *habeo*-type formed with the verb **jbmēti* ‘have’ and a subjunctive-like construction is also attested in Torlak, e.g., in Timok: *Ti s’ine im’a da ziv’if mn’ogo* ‘You, son, will live long’. This feature is also one of the Balkan elements.

Two types of negative forms of the future tense are possible: *n’etju* / *n’etje* (*da*) *d’ojdem* and *n’ema* (*da*) *d’ojdem* ‘I will come’. The latter form, common to the dialects on the territory of Bulgaria, with an uninflected auxiliary verb (particle), is derived from **jbmēti* ‘have’. The rules of distribution for *tju* / *tje*, *n’ema* and *da* have not been established (Mirić 2018a), cf. Belogradčik: *vi tje da sp’ite li?* ‘Will you sleep?’ ~ *tje zn’ete li u d’ola?* ‘Will you reap in the valley?’. The position of the future marker and the semantic verb can be distant: *ja tju snitše izokam napole* ‘I will call the sun out’.

Torlak varieties show also a series of other Balkan develop-

ments. The infinitive has been lost, albeit it occurs in future tense and prohibitive functions under the influence of Standard Serbian. The infinitive has been replaced with finite complementation, typically in the future tense (*toj t̃e v'idif* 'that, you'll see', *t̃e se ž'enif* '(you) will get married') or as a complement to modal, phase, and other verbs (*ne mož da id'emo* '(we) can't go'), *ja poŃ'e da pl'at̃em* 'I started to cry').

The future tense marker is an uninflected, grammaticalized form of the 3Sg of the volitional verb **h̃bt̃eti* 'want', which has lost its volitional meaning and turned into an invariable particle, as in Western Bulgaria: *t̃e idef pri m'uf*, *sv'adba t̃e pr'aif* '(you) will go to (the) husband, you will have (the) wedding'. In Eastern Serbia, the 1Sg is still an inflected auxiliary and it is usually the only form which is not grammaticalized: *Ako ti dam s'uk̃nutu, ja t̃eu gol'a da ost'anem* 'if I give you the skirt, I will be naked'.

3.3. Aspects of Syntax

Declarative complementizers vary. In the dialects in Serbia, *da* 'that' prevails, but is not exclusive (*vidif li da te žena tela zakole* 'Do you see that your wife wanted to slaughter you?'; *a nee se kazuvata gde je ženŃska glava* 'But (she) did not say that she was female'). In Western Bulgaria the corresponding complementizer is *t̃e* 'that'.

The tendency toward the particle/complementizer omission in the future tense has been registered in a number of Balkan languages and dialects. In Torlak the particle/complementizer *da* is optionally omitted (Belić 1905; Cyxun 1981; Topolinjska 1994; Remetić 1996; Bogdanović 2007; Mirić 2018a), e.g., Lužnica: *ko položi, taj t̃e da ide na 'osustvo* 'Whoever passes (the test in the army), will take a leave of absence', *t̃e st'ignemo do t̃s'Ńkvu* 'We will arrive at the church'. In Eastern Serbia, the variation in *da*-omission has been observed between the Lužnica and Timok varieties (Lužnica speakers tend to omit *da* more frequently (Mirić 2018b)). Although there are indications that *da*-omission occurs under certain linguistic conditions, e.g., when a series of words (e.g., clitics) is embedded between the future tense marker and the finite verb (Mirić 2018a), this phenomenon remains underinvestigated and requires further research.

The reduplication of direct and indirect nominal objects is quite

rare, but is yet occasionally observed in the dialects in Eastern Serbia (*kako vi ga zovu deteto* ‘what is your child’s name?’ (lit. ‘how do they call him your child?’; MDABYa 2005b: Map 38, 40, 42; Miloradović 2019). In the dialects in the northern parts of North Macedonia and Western Bulgaria, reduplications do not occur regularly (*kutŕe gi obnovija* ‘(they) restored houses’; *ga viknavme gogota* ‘we called Gogo (to come)’; *mu isetŕuaa meot* ‘(they) cut his belly’; *sam e rekla nine* ‘I told Nina’). This phenomenon has not been systematically investigated.

Existential constructions are formed with the verbs ‘be’ and ‘have’ and can be personal and impersonal in both cases: *bile i ŕip-tare ŕto ni pomogle* ‘there were Albanians who helped us’; *bilo ŕudi po kutŕie* ‘there were people in the houses’; *imale i vojniŕsi na straŕzu* ‘there were soldiers on guard’; *imalo junŕsi u obor* ‘there were bull-calves in the stable’; *...muŕ i ŕena imalo, pa imali dve deca* ‘there was a husband and a wife, and they had two children’.

The inventory of pronominal and verbal clitics and their grammatical roles (markers of case and theme-rheme relations, auxiliary verbs, etc.) are typically Balkan Slavic. The rules for the distribution of clitics, for which there are only isolated observations, vary greatly between the “Wackernagel” east (in Eastern Serbia and Western Bulgaria) and the “Western Balkan” west of the territory (South Metohija, Gornja Morava, northwestern North Macedonia), cf. MDABYa (2005b): *dal sam mu ga* ‘I gave it to him’ (Eastern Serbia); *sam ti gu daneja* ‘I brought it to you’ (South Metohija). Balkan-type pronominal reduplication is attested: *ŕu ga pitam ja nega* ‘I will ask him’. Accent shift to clitics is allowed: *itŕer ŕto s’i rabotila* ‘What did you do yesterday?’

The functions of grammatical categories and forms are practically not described in the traditional dialectological literature. Although dialectological monographs offer a detailed report on the formal inventories of dialects and the groups to which they belong, based on a small number of transcripts of authentic dialectological texts, they are substantially incomplete when it comes to the most prominent functional differences between the standard languages (Bulgarian, Macedonian and Serbian) and the dialects in question.

3.4. Lexicon

In spite of a large number of differential dialect dictionaries (cf. Ćirković et al., this volume), analytical studies of the lexicon of individual Torlak dialects are scarce. It has been known for some time that there is a layer of Slavic lexical archaisms (from the lexical fund of the corresponding standard language) as well as loanwords—Albanian (mainly in the west of the region, Stanišić 1995), Balkan-Romance and Turkish. For instance, in the dialects in Dolni Polog, Macedonian dialectologists distinguish the following lexical dialectisms—phonetic ones (*b'ua* ‘flea’), those pertaining to word-formation (*bola* ‘pain, illness’), semantic (*dupka* ‘grave’), motivational (*vočjak* ‘orchard’) as well as numerous Turkisms (*becar* ‘bachelor’) and a few Albanisms (*besa* ‘honest word’; Labroska et al. 2012, 162–164, 135). A number of these lexemes are included in the Standard Serbian lexical fund and, therefore, are “not of interest” for contrastive Serbian dialectology. Unfortunately, at the moment we don’t possess enough South Slavic dialectal evidence for establishing lexical archaisms in Torlak with reference to non-standard.

The vocabulary of the traditional culture of the Torlak region, like the traditional culture itself, manifests archaic cultural and linguistic features in combination with Balkan innovations (Plotnikova 2004; MDABYa 2005a; Sedakova 2016). Eastern Serbia and Western Bulgaria have a higher concentration of these features such as *lada* ‘pre-wedding ritual’; *tenəts* ‘the walking dead’; names for a child participating in a wedding, originating from *nija-* ‘swing, sway’; *rosomanka* ‘the rite of calling rain; its participant’; names of carols originating from *ala-* ‘a kind of evil spirit’; *metf'č'in dən* ‘St. Andrew’s Day’ and customs of bear appeasement; *mif'trovdən* ‘the day marking the ritual protection of the house and household from mice’; *svetəts* ‘the feast of the patron saint of the family’; *m'zigruda* ‘the ritual spring milking of sheep’.

3.5. Research Desiderata

This concise overview of the inventory of the main differential features (elements and categories) of Torlak in phonetics and phonology, morphology, morphosyntax, syntax, and lexicon uncovers the special interplay of intrasystemic and areal variants, often archa-

isms and innovations, each of which deserves detailed formal and functional research in the future. Very little is known about the distribution rules which apply to these elements and categories in local dialects and in the area as a whole. Observations on their behavior in the speech production of the dialect speakers are lacking. The comparative-historical, areal, and structuralist paradigms of research on Torlak in the future should at least be accompanied by sociolinguistics and perceptual and aggregate dialectology, in order to obtain *an up-to-date synthetic image* of this dialect area (cf. Konior et al., this volume).

4. Conclusion

Areal embedding shows that Torlak is unique among major Slavic dialect areas (cf. Ger. *Dialekträume*) due to the nature of its two linguistic borders: the eastern and southern borders are formed by clusters of genealogical isoglosses, whereas the north-western border is areal-typological. The former was not established during the Slavs' settlement in the Balkan region, but in relatively recent times—due to the migration of the West South Slavic population (and the spread of their dialect) from west to east. The latter is a gradual, wide transitional zone, which does not consist of any clusters of isoglosses and was formed by the spread of Balkan innovations from south-east to north-west.

The major dialects in the Serbian part of Torlak (the Prizren-Timok dialect area) are relatively well described in individual studies, although the lack of a “Serbian dialectological atlas” hinders a synthesis. In Bulgaria the state of affairs is just the opposite (Sobolev 2014b), with the same result—a synthesis is yet to be provided. Linguistic embedding presents Torlak as a coherent, but differentiated and variative system, especially on the phonetical and phonological, morphological and morphosyntactic levels. Our brief overview of the specific Torlak linguistic inventory shows that the study of the distribution rules of units and categories, their function and semantics, represents a desideratum and a very promising field for future research in Serbian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Slavic, Balkan, and typological studies. The main linguistic features that characterize Torlak and its position within the South Slavic and Balkan linguistic landscape are a specific combination of archaic and innovative developments.

Although in both countries the depopulation of the Torlak area and the gradual language death are a major problem, and full dialect competencies characterize the speech of very few members of the oldest generation, usually elderly women, the base Torlak dialect can still be found. Despite the continued existence of the concept of a cross-border Torlak identity (cf. Konior et al., this volume) in the Belogradčik and Timok region, the sociolinguistically unique character of Torlak is additionally influenced by the obstacle that its speakers belong to several South Slavic nations of different denominations as well as by the presence of political borders and by the “roofing” by several Slavic standard languages. Under the influence of standard languages, divergent processes have further developed in this genealogically undivided dialect area.

Any future research on linguistic variation and language change in the Torlak area should rely on both quantitatively and qualitatively relevant data and take into account the geographic variation and social stratification of the speakers. It should also consider the different strategies used in the speakers’ communication behavior, and take into account state language and culture policies as well as the impact of political borders on linguistic reality. The main constant determining divergent transformations of language and culture within the Torlak area are the borders.

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Торлакский диалектный комплекс в ареальном
и диалектологическом освещении

Цель настоящей обзорной статьи – служить введением в лингвистическую проблематику малоисследованного торлакского диалектного комплекса – призренско-тимокской диалектной области в Сербии и прилегающих близкородственных диалектов в Западной Болгарии и северной части Северной Македонии. Представлено современное положение дел в описании основных лингвистических характеристик торлакского диалектного комплекса в южнославянском и балканском ареалах, в пространственной и временной вариативности, а также разграничение диалектов, находящихся по разные стороны государственной границы между Сербией и Болгарией. Основное внимание уделено предполагаемому генеалогическому единству торлакского диалектного комплекса, тогда как для описания релевантных черт применяются качественные исследовательские методы. В отличие от предыдущих исследований, концентрировавшихся на отдельных языковых признаках и их группах или на глубоком и детальном анализе ряда диалектологически релевантных черт в отдельном районе или населенном пункте, настоящая статья предлагает краткий обзор всех важнейших внутриязыковых характеристик торлакского ареала, преимущественно в Восточной Сербии и Западной Болгарии. Помимо этого мы восполняем некоторые пробелы в существующей диалектологической дескрипции, а также намечаем пути дальнейших исследований. Второй раздел статьи, опирающийся на имеющуюся литературу вопроса, предлагает читателю обзор основных лингвистических черт, позволяющих охарактеризовать торлакский диалектный комплекс и определить его место среди южнославянских и балканских языков и диалектов. Для уточнения положения торлакского диалектного комплекса используется метод лингвистической географии (ареальной лингвистики); рассматривается также многогранное взаимодействие языковых, исторических, политических и социолингвистических факторов. В третьем разделе методами описательной, сравнительно-исторической и структурной диалектологии выявлены вариативные торлакские диалектные признаки, в т.ч. редкие и ранее недостаточно изучавшиеся. Локальные варианты, бы-

тующие в северной части Северной Македонии и в южной части Сербии, рассматриваются лишь в качестве фона для более широкого сопоставления.