CURRENT TRENDS IN BALKAN LINGUISTICS

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Note: For the sake of convenience, I refer to these works as #1, #2, and #3 in the review.

It has been almost two centuries since Kopitar (1829) signalled the beginning of the field of Balkan linguistics and, arguably, of contact linguistics in general.1 The first century or so, from Kopitar to Sandfield (1926/1930), was devoted largely to the collection of data, most of them of necessity dialectal, since the Balkan standard languages were, during that period, largely nascent or even pre-natal. Although Milutinović (1861) and Selčić (1925) provided seminal generalizations, Sandfield’s was the landmark synthesis that established the field as such. Schaller’s handbook (1975) was the first attempt to take stock of the field after almost half a century, and as such generated considerable attention and no less than thirteen reviews and review articles (see Joseph 1987 for summation and references). It was followed by nine other handbooks of various types and orientations, from brief syntheses to lexicographer analyses to compendia of grammatical descriptions or articles on individual topics (Sollá 1980, Banfi 1985, Feuillet 1986, Asenova 1989/2002, Demčićajka and Totan 1990/1998, Demiraj 1994/2004, Reiter 1994, Hinterich 1999, Steinke and Vraciu 1999).2 These later works, however, have mostly utilized standardized languages rather than dialects. While some Balkan countries have sponsored very detailed dialect atlas projects—most notably Romania and Bulgaria (this later extending into Serbia and Greek Macedonia)—and other countries have produced useful but less detailed mapping projects, none did so with a view to the Balkan Sprachbund, especially syntax and shared Balkan

1. Leake (1814, 380) makes similar observations, albeit he attributes the cause to the Slavic invasions rather than a Thracian-Illirian substratum.

2. We can also note here collections of articles by individual major figures in the field such as Ilievska (1988) and Rosetti (1985). The two volumes of Haarmann’s (1978) Balkanizing linguistik examine only the statistics and distribution of the Romance lexicon and the sociolinguistic situation in Moldova, respectively, while Greenberg’s Language and Identity in the Balkans (2004) is, as the subtitle makes clear, about the break-up of the former Serbo-Croatian.
lexicon. Despite the calls for a Balkan linguistic atlas going back to Skok and Budimir (1934-35, 15), the works under consideration here—and the others of which series they constitute a part—are the first to attempt the beginnings of such a project. As such, they mark the first time that cross-linguistic, dialectological data in the Balkans have been accumulated and synthesized with a specifically Balkan linguistic intent. Simultaneously, these works provide rich sources of fresh empirical, dialectal data much needed by the field and by linguists in general. Of particular note in this regard is #1, which documents a seriously endangered language and is the first description to concentrate on Aromanian syntax.

As #1 (17-18) makes clear, the Aromanian-speaking village of Turia was divided between Romanian-identified and Greek-identified inhabitants. The Romanian-identified speakers went to Romania in the course of the wars and population movements of the first half of the twentieth century, and many of those now in the village under 40 do not know or only passively understand Aromanian, and everyone in the village today knows Greek. It is thus the case that Turia is the only point on the atlas where all the speakers of the language under study are known to be bilingual in two Balkan languages. Although the main title of the volume on Turia is in German, like the rest of the series the language of the text itself is Russian. Unlike the other atlas material (as opposed to synthetic) volumes published so far, the data in Turia are not entirely monoglot but are sometimes glossed in Greek, an indication of the pervasive influence of that language on those who still speak Aromanian in the village.

Like the three earlier single-dialect volumes in the series (Sobolev 2001, Jolly and Sobolev 2002, Jolly and Sobolev 2003), #1 comprises an introduction (16-25), syntax (26-309), lexicon (310-410), ethnolinguistics (411-34), and texts from fourteen speakers (435-80). The bibliography (487-88) consists of 31 items, and there is a 38-minute CD of 10 tracks (keyed to the texts) from seven of the twenty-two speakers (four men and three women, born 1918-1935) who served as primary consultants. The volume also has a useful map (15) of the Aromanian, partially Aromanian, and formerly Aromanian villages of the Pindus range in northwestern Greece between Grevena and Ioannina on the west and east and between Koinitsa and Trikala on the north and south. Like the preceding volumes, the focus is precisely on those areas of greatest interest to Balkan linguists, namely syntax and lexicon. Although Jolly and Sobolev (2003) gave some basic information on phonology and morphology of the Muhurr Gega dialect, #1 only lists the phonological units with no further discussion of phonology, morphophonology or morphology. The transcription system is clear albeit somewhat hybrid, as in Romanian orthography, and I for its voiceless equivalent.

The dialect does not distinguish high back unrounded u from lower ù, but the explanation that the symbol used is ù is separated from the list of phonemes and the use of the macron is distracting. Vowel length is indicated with a cedilla.

As with the previous volumes, each section follows a uniform questionnaire, which yields results that are comparable across languages. The questionnaire takes Slavic as its baseline of comparison, and so, for example, the section on prepositions has questions on the equivalents of Slavic (Russian) prr, po, dlj. Nonetheless, the overall coverage of syntactic and morphosyntactic phenomena is complete enough to treat thoroughly non-Slavic phenomena as well.

The fifteen sections that make up the syntax chapter are the following: Substantive (gender, number, case, and definite/indefinite: 28-96). Pronoun (gender, number, animate, personal, reflexive, possessive, demonstrative, interrogative, various [e.g., the behavior of 'all': 97-121], Adjective (grammatical categories, long, short, Greek Krania or Krania; Pindus group, southern Aromanian, Grevena dialect, Aegean Macedonian, northwestern Greek), Case (Greek Nominative, Genitive, Dative, and Accusative, various [absent in Aromanian], definitiveness, gradation, and appositivity: 121-30), Numerals (one, quantitative, collective, personal-visible [absent in Aromanian], ordinal, various distributives, fractions [Greek used in this dialect], ap-
population of 2359) were settled there after the exchange of populations with Turkey mandated by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The choice of villages representing a minimum of ethnic mixing and a relative maximum of time settled in the same place are classic criteria in nation-state dialectology, but in the case of Balkan dialectology, it is precisely language contact that is of interest. On the one hand, by select- ing villages with relatively little attested language contact, we can get a better sense of those features shared across the broadest range of any given linguistic system. On the other hand, however, to the extent that we are interested in the possible effects of mixing gender (no for Slavic, yes for the others) based on questions 1–3, and whether the plural of 'brother' is treated as feminine singular (collective) or plural (yes for the former Serbo-Croatian, both for Albanian, no for the rest) based on question 13; questions 10–13, 17, and 19 do not have maps, questions 1–3, 4–5, and 6–8 are each treated in one map. Twenty maps relate to number; 61 cover case relations (2 nominative, 23 accusative, 9 dative, 18 instrumental, 8 genitive, 1 locative); 33 treat definiteness, and one map whether the markers of adjectival gradation can also be used with substantives, e.g., Macedonian po juna more of a hero (everywhere except Osok and Zavala, i.e., this is a classic Balkanism, as is the morphological realization of a definite article). The marginal position of Torlak Serbian in this regard is seen in the fact that all the classic Balkan dialects require the definite article in expressions like 'wash my hands' (Macedonian si grij mijam naseve: map 119). Balkan Slavic is distinguished from Balkan non-Slavic in that the latter require the definite article when speaking of the inhabitants of a place in the plural (other than in constructions with indefinable pronouns), whereas in Balkan Slavic the article is facultative or absent (map 117), e.g., Macedonian Varošanite se loli 'The people from Varoš are mean.' When speaking of a spouse, sibling, or child (in the absence of a possessive blood' occur only in the western Balkans proper, but within that range, the plural has the meaning 'blood feud' only in Murhut and Peštani, i.e., Geg Albanian and west Macedonian but not Tosk Albanian.

Given the fact that the ethnolinguistic sections of the four published dialect descriptions in the MDIJA series are so disparate, the synthesis of this is especially welcome. All four of the single-dialect volumes have sections on the folk calendar (movable and fixed feasts), family rituals (birth, marriage, burial), and mythology (magic, omens, supernatural beings, the evil eye, etc.). A section on economic rituals (sowing, reaping, animal husbandry, building, rain-making, etc.) is given separate status in the Bulgarian and Albanian volumes, but is accorded only two short paragraphs along with other miscellaneous folk beliefs in the Aromanian. In the Bulgarian volume, there is some prose coverage of the calendar and economic rituals, lexicons of family rituals and folk beliefs, and then sections in various texts covering these topics. The two Albanian volumes give the questions used in the questionnaire and answers with the questions as well as paragraph-length explanations. The Leshnjë volume has dialect texts interpolated with the answers, while the Murhut volume has all the texts at the end. The Aromanian volume has only paragraphs on various topics, with no lexicons and all texts at the end.

The data synthesized in 34 are like an encyclopedia of Balkan spiritual or folk culture. The volume comprises 191 maps in the same format as 82, plus 29 maps that are not mapped, e.g., the name of the first Friday after Easter, for which there is an especially long section in Macedonian, Rhodopian Bulgarian, Peloponnesian Greek, and Aromanian, but not in the other dialects (IC:4.21: p. 407); bread prepared for the first day of plowing and eaten in the field, Slavic only but not Osok or Zavala (HIC:1.1: p. 409); symbolic bride price (HIC:2.23.1: p. 415); the word for grave' (HIC:3.1.1: p. 416); the child of a vampire, Peštani only (IVC:1.4: p. 419). The mappings also reveal a number of interesting patterns and terms. Map 39 portrays the naming and custom of wearing red and white threads at the coming of spring in the beginning of March, map 42 gives the forms of the name of St. George's Day (noted in all the villages, including Murhut and Leshnjë, which are Muslim), and map 43 gives the name of the animal sacrificed on that day (not practiced in Osok, Eratya, and Turia, no special name in Zavala, Gega, and Kastelli). Map 54 gives the name of the day of the Blessed Virgin (occurring everywhere except Leshnjë, including Murhut, where shënma, August 23, is the wedding day when the bride is brought to the groom's house throughout the region). Map 96 gives the terminology connected with rain-making rituals: derivatives of *dohrija- in Zavala, Leshnjë, and Gega, *diljile in Peštani, derivatives of *prrgjeu- in the remainder except Osok and Kastelli, where it is absent. Map 129 gives the name of the veil covering the bride (only Albanian and Peštani have the Turkish davul). Based on map 152, there is no term for special women mourners except in Dalmatia, Montenegro and Greece. Map 127 gives the term for the banner carried in wedding processions, which apparently does not occur in Albania or the Rhodopes. This is an instance in which it would be useful to have linguistic data from elsewhere, since Albanians in Macedonia do have such a custom. Altogether 95 maps pertain to the folk calendar, 4 to economic rituals, 11 to birth, 39 to weddings, 22 to burial, and 30 to mythology.

Despite the richness of the material, some lacunae point up the difficulties of precisely this kind of work, in part owing to the troubled religious history of the region in the twentieth century. Given that folk religion is an important aspect of village spiritual culture, the violent campaign against religion in Albania and the less virulent but nonetheless existing discouragement of religions in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria (and Romania), the campaigns against Islam in Bul- garia, the forced migration of Muslims from Greece (except western Thrace) as well as Chris- tians from Turkey (except Constantinople), plus the depredations of the Holocaust all render this a difficult topic. Thus, for example, while baptismal rituals are touched on, nothing is said of the sinnet (Muslim male circumcision), perhaps in part because the ceremony was illegal in Albania for almost forty years and the only Muslim villages in the sample are in Albania.

With regard to selection of points, the synthetic volumes are heavily weighted in favor of Slavic dialects, some of which (Osok and Zavala) are South Slavic but not strongly so. The main dialects are Balkan Slavic. Still, the mappings provide for the argument that, given the range and diversity of Slavic dialects, they require more points. Moreover, as the only dialect continuum that runs between Slavic and the rest of Europe, the people of the area have a unique history.
contiguously both through the Balkans and beyond it (the extra-Balkan dialects or related languages of the other speech communities being discontinuous). Slavic provides the best test case of the spread of Balkanization. In terms of the overall representative quality of the sample, it is fair to say that the selection has only one major lacuna within the geographic context of the sample, namely north Aromanian. To be sure, a more Romance-oriented sample would have included points for Megleno-Romanian and Deco-Romanian (at least Moldavia and Walachia, although the same principle that mandated the inclusion of Otok for Slavic would require at least one of the northwestern dialects for Romanian), but these are desiderata for the future. In the meantime, the current volumes are a treasure trove of Balkanological material and belong on the shelf of everyone interested in the region who knows the relevant languages.

REFERENCES

Leake, William M. Researches in Greece. London: John Booth, 1814.