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Foreword

Marc L. Greenberg

The volume before you is the English translation of Adnan Čirgić's handbook *Dijalektologija crnogorskoga jezika*, translated into English as *Dialectology of the Montenegrin Language* by Goran Drinčić. Čirgić holds a PhD from the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, Croatia, where he defended his dissertation on the dialect of Podgorica Muslims in 2007. He is the founding dean of the Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature (Fakultet za crnogorski jezik i književnost), established in 2010, in Cetinje, the old royal capital of Montenegro. Though a young scholar—born in 1980—Čirgić has produced a prodigious number of publications, already growing past some 600 texts, including articles, authored and edited books, and textbooks. Notably, he is the coauthor of a standard grammar (Čirgić, Pranjković, and Silić 2010) and of the contemporary orthography of standard Montenegrin (Perović, Silić, Vasiljeva, Čirgić, and Šušanj 2010) (see also Vujović 2018). He is the founding editor of *Lingua Montenegrina*, the journal of Montenegrin philology, published by the Faculty. He was the recipient of the prestigious Montenegrin 13 July Award (*Trinaestojulska nagrada*) in 2018 for his numerous contributions to research on and standardization of the Montenegrin language.

The *Dialectology of the Montenegrin Language* is the first attempt in a monograph to treat the Montenegrin dialects as a linguistic area, focusing on the structural characteristics of the Montenegrin portion of the larger Štokavian dialect, which is now spoken in four different successor states of the former Yugoslavia and corresponds to the four standard languages of those states: Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Serbian.

The English translation presents the nonspecialist and the Slavistic reader with an opportunity to learn about the dialect diversity of this small region that challenges received notions of the structural characteristics of language

formerly known as “Serbo-Croatian.” To raise but one example, every Slavist “knows” that voicing neutralization of final obstruents occurs everywhere in Slavic except in standard Ukrainian and Serbo-Croatian. In three recent overviews of issues in Slavic phonology we read:

Voicing assimilation is common to all Slavic languages, and word-final devoicing occurs in most Slavic languages, with the notable exception of Ukrainian (East Slavic) and Štokavian dialects of BCS (South Slavic). (Kavitskaya 2017, 400)

The potential word-final opposition of voiced vs. voiceless was not realized in most Slavic zones, such as Russian, due to the later devoicing of obstruents in word-final position. However, some Slavic languages, such as Ukrainian and Standard (Štokavian) Serbo-Croatian, do have the word-final voicing opposition, which arose as a result of *jer*-fall. (Feldstein in Jakobson 2018/1929, 90)

All the Slavic languages—with the exception of BCMS and Ukrainian—neutralize the opposition voiceless/voiced in favor of voiceless: *b, d, g, v, z* are thus realized as *p, t, k, f, s*. (Feuillet 2018, 97; translation MLG)

These authors’ statements are not incorrect, so much as they are imprecise. They capture a top-level generalization and are based on selected dialects that form the basis for the respective standard languages, but they omit notable exceptions. This bit of generalized “fact” is repeated in the literature to the point where it is a catechism about the structures found in Slavic languages—any number of handbooks would have yielded similar statements. Yet, counterexamples can be found in dialect handbooks; for example, Ivić (1958, 36, 44, 118, 214, 219, 277) and Lisac (2003, 21, 101, 108, 144) note this fact about Štokavian final devoicing in various dialect areas, among which the dialects in Montenegro also figure, and, accordingly, this phenomenon is accounted for in Čirgić’s handbook. The point is that structural facts, such as pervasive exceptions found in dialects, are either ignored or sifted out of the literature, presumably because what we “know” about Slavic languages is based on standard languages, which are by definition scrubbed of their dialect diversity. In this regard, Kavitskaya’s and Feldstein’s formulations are instructive, as they project back onto the relevant “Štokavian dialects,” a fact that applies to an idealized dialect or set of dialects on which the current—now four—standards are based. Jakobson himself noted in his “Remarks . . .,” originally published in 1929, that the neutralization of voicing is the problem that requires explanation. Writing about the consequences of the loss of weak *jers*, he writes: “Curiously, in the majority of Slavic dialects, particularly in the majority of Russian dialects, this opposition has been eliminated and the former relationship has been reestablished: voiced and voiceless are phonologically opposed only before vowels and sonorant consonants” (2018/1929,

78). The matter is not trivial, as it potentially reveals a fundamental difference in dialect systems in Common Slavic prior to the fall of weak *jers*. Andersen identifies the distinction as a matter of voicing versus protensity features (1986); Sawicka (2001) identifies the neutralization dialects as belonging to a northern Slavic archaic zone and the non-neutralizing dialects to an innovative zone and declares the matter still open. Moreover, Danylenko points out that the neutralization feature is in play concerning the contested question of contact features in Carpathian and Balkan *Sprachbünde* (2019: 361–362). In short, discoveries remain to be made and it is in the examination of rich variation data where we are likely to make them.

In the present handbook, Čirgić takes issue with what he discusses as traditional Serbo-Croatistics. The study of dialectology in the Western South Slavic area in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been tied to the ideological project of unifying as much of this territory into as large a linguistic community as possible. The South Slavic manifestation of the Pan-Slavic movement in the early nineteenth century of what was later to become the Yugoslav project intended to unify all Slavs in a roughly triangular region from Villach in Austria, to Varna in Bulgaria, to Lake Scutari in Montenegro by means of a single, artificially amalgamated language, named Illyrian (Greenberg 2011, 365). An alternative, compromise solution, formalized in 1850, narrowed the project to Croatian and Serbian as two variants of a single language based on the Štokavian dialect. This settlement on standardization informed not just the writing systems of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes that emerged from the disintegration of empires at the end of World War I, but it established the framework for all linguistic inquiry into the language in the region for the duration of Yugoslavia, until its dissolution in the early 1990s. The highly influential composite isogloss maps of the Western South Slavic area drawn by Serbian dialectologist Pavle Ivić (1924–1999) in his 1958 handbook (pp. 31, 32), of which the Štokavian dialect territory occupies the majority share, emphasize the gradual nature of the transition in dialect diversity from the bundle of isoglosses (the closest one gets to a border in a linguistically comprehensible sense) separating off Slovene in the west and the Macedo-Bulgarian “fan” in the east. This unificatory view of Štokavian dialects as an organic reflection of “Serbo-Croatian” corresponds to the reality behind the view—impressionistic as it may be—that all Štokavian is mutually intelligible. Yet mutual intelligibility may also obscure structural diversity. Moreover, legal reification of such unificatory concepts can also render ethnolinguistic identities “invisible” and, in effect, “erase” them (see Greenberg 2017–2018: 434). Along with such identities, the structural facts behind the regional differentiation of language varieties in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro are blithely occluded by the reduction to “Serbo-Croatian.” In this framework, Čirgić

critically examines Ivić's contributions as the leading authority on dialectology during the period of "Serbo-Croatistics," pointing out that other scholars, such as the Bosnian dialectologist Asim Peco (1927–2011), had in the same period helped to better understand the full range of dialect diversity, focusing in particular on the features of the Eastern Herzegovinian dialect group, which straddles Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. These and similar scholars' research, discussed in Čirgić's overview, were backgrounded against the prevailing and officially valorized unitaristic perspective during the Yugoslav period.

Language matters are always complicated and confusing, even to linguists, because language is a slippery concept—consider Max Weinreich's now hackneyed dictum about a dialect with an army and a navy—a concept viewed differently from different perspectives. Nakazawa (2015, 127) opened his essay with the question "What is Montenegrin language (*crnogorski jezik*)?" Such a question can be answered in different ways, depending on who is asking and who is answering and what the defining criteria are. In the conclusion to his article, Nakazawa noted that the Serbian linguist Ranko Bugarski "called the dissolution of Serbo-Croatian an 'administrative dissolution'" but that "actually, there are no extreme changes in the practical language use—people speak as they have been speaking in the past. However, the administrative dissolution creates a symbolic difference" (Nakazawa 2015, 136). But symbolic differences are not just "out there"—they are accepted or rejected by people who use and internalize them in their cognitive frames for their perception of the world. Symbolic notions can answer the question "Who am I?" Language data and language structure, however, offer another perspective. In a real sense, they are "out there" and can be examined as *things*, as it were. Čirgić's handbook asks us to consider, in this sense, the "things" that make Montenegrin a language.

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