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COMMENTARIES ON THE SPECIAL ISSUE  
*Ethnographic Accounts of Linguistic Issues  
in the Yugoslav Successor States*

Guest editor  
Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić

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## Language Issues in former Yugoslav Space: A Commentary

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Although the break-up of Yugoslavia has spawned an enormous literature in many fields, *Language Issues in former Yugoslav Space: Current Perspectives* (Aegean Working Papers in Ethnographic Linguistics Vol. 2, No. 1), 2018 ed. by Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić (general ed. Costas Canakis), is a welcome assessment of some aspects of the current state of affairs from an ethnolinguistic standpoint. The varied articles in this volume each deserve individual attention, and thus my remarks address the articles separately.

### **1. Ethnolinguistic accounts of linguistic issues in the Yugoslav successor states:**

#### **An introduction**

**by Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić**

The introduction to the volume gives a good overview of the papers and lets the reader know what to expect. It also attempts, to the extent possible in an editorial introduction, to fill the lacunae left by the fact that the editors were unable to get an author dealing specifically with Croatian or Slovene (or Kosovo, although Albanian is considered). It can be hoped that the valuable contributions in this volume will spur others to write appropriate articles addressing such issues elsewhere in former Yugoslavia.

I have two observations with regard to p. iv. First, the spelling Kosov@ (also on p. x), which combines the Serbian form *Kosovo* with the Albanian definite form *Kosova*, is a sort of acronym that many of us used during the 1991-2008 period, when Kosovo's status was contested in what the international community called — after the coming into force of UNSCR 1244 in 1999 — “constructive ambiguity” (itself a term invented for another purpose by Henry Kissinger). Since independence, however, Kosovar diplomats use the spelling *Kosovo* on the English side of their official business cards, and English-language official documents use the spelling *Kosovo*. It is thus the case that *Kosovo* is now accepted as the English-language designation of the independent state, while Kosov@ actually refers to the pre-independence state of ambiguity or, perhaps, to Serbia's refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence. Second, Kersten-Pejanić refers to “Croatia's open and energetic efforts to quickly establish its own standard language” and then states that none of the other ex-Yu republics “have been inactive when it comes to the macro-level of nationalist language policies.” As a broad generalization, this is not unfair, but it is important to note that the activities have



been of quite different natures in the different successor states. Some groups in Bosnia and Montenegro, like those in Croatia, have worked toward new standards. Slovenia and Macedonia had standards in place at the time of the break-up, as did Kosovo (albeit one with a more complex history in the 1944-1991 period). This has left Serbia in a different sort of position than the other three ex-Yu ex-Serbo-Croatian republics, but Stanković & Stafanović's contribution does a good job addressing this, a point to which I return below. One could also mention Vojvodina, where Bunjevci, who are Catholics and some of whom identify as Croatian, are also attempting to create a standard (Mandić & Belić 2018).

On p. v Kersten-Pejanić makes a statement to which I would like to draw positive attention: "Despite a high degree of mutual intelligibility, the symbolic function of distinct national/standard languages is not to be underestimated." Here I would note that this point draws emphatic support from a recent doctoral dissertation on language and translation and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Fidahić 2018).

Kersten-Pejanić provides an interesting and valuable discussion on linguistic gender issues through a comparison of how gender is marked on nouns denoting female persons in Croatian vis-à-vis Serbian. Here the Croatian creation of neologisms to increase its distinction from Serbian (often associated with reactionary politics), on the one hand, and EU integration (generally viewed as progressive), on the other, have combined to produce a distinct realization of gender equality in Croatian as opposed to Serbian, which by insisting on the older norm becomes reactionary.

On p. ix Kersten-Pejanić refers to "twenty years after the last conflicts took place," but if one counts the armed insurrection in Macedonia in 2001, which was to some extent a continuation of the 1999 NATO war, then we still have a couple of years to go. The statement later on that page about discourses of ethnic hatred (including homophobia) being visible in people's "writings on the wall" is spot on. I can cite here an example from North Macedonia. The criminal rule of VMRO-DPMF 2006-2015 (Prizma 2015) in what is now the Republic of North Macedonia went together with the international community's permitting Greece to bully Macedonia into making the name change as the only way forward to recover from that criminal rule (Friedman 2018a, 2018b, 2019). This combination of circumstances helped to instrumentalize ethnic tensions as a means of protecting corruption. This was visible "on the wall" in the Karpoš neighborhood of Skopje — a predominantly Macedonian but ethnically mixed middle class neighborhood just west of the center. When I arrived in Skopje in August of 2018, when the 30 September 2018 referendum on the Prespa Agreement was the focus of Macedonian attention, the small supermarket across from my apartment had been painted bright red and yellow (the colors of the Macedonian flag). In neatly stenciled small black letters on an otherwise blank wall was a graffito име е идентитет 'name is identity' and above it, scrawled in large black spray-paint: СМРТ ЗА ШИПТАРИ 'death for Shiptars (pejorative for Albanians)'. The offensive graffito, by law, should have been removed immediately. Instead it stayed untouched for more than a month — despite being only two blocks away from the local police station — until someone crossed it out with the same sort of spray paint. In North Macedonia, as in many states, self-appointed guardians of the nation continue to promote exclusivist nationalism as a means to their own corrupt ends.



## 2. Linguistic emancipation within the Serbian mental map:

### The implementation of the Montenegrin and Macedonian standard languages

by Christian Voß

This article presents an interesting comparison of the standardizations of Macedonian and Montenegrin. Voß's basic claim is that the implementation of both standards has been impeded by Serbian because, as he states in his abstract: "Serbian, as the traditional H-variety, is omnipresent in both countries." (p. 1). Here one must make a tense correction. In the case of Macedonian, Serbian certainly was omnipresent during the Yugoslav period (both first and second), and, indeed, during the second Yugoslav period Serbian was the default language for use with foreigners. However, since independence, Serbian has dropped out of use and only the older generations educated prior to 1991 still know it. Today English is the most likely default language for use with foreigners and, perhaps predictably, has replaced Serbian as the source of puristic anxieties for language planners.

The article is both interesting and provocative, and so I shall respond to some of its statements. On p. 4 Voß writes: "It is only possible to speak of a form of Serbo-Croatian pluricentrism for the period from 1850 to 1967." Here I think the formulation needs to read: It is only possible to speak of **an uncontested** form of Serbo-Croatian pluricentrism for the period from 1850 to 1967. Serbo-Croatian pluricentrism continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s and even a bit into the 1990s. To be sure, the dictionary crisis of 1967 and Brozović's 1971 declaration challenged the notion of Serbo-Croatian pluricentrism, but the 1974 Yugoslav constitution, by recognizing republic-based variants, continued a policy of pluricentrism which was accepted in Bosnia-Herzegovina and implemented by the issuing of a *pravopis* (orthographic handbook). Thus, even if one accepts the claims of the Croatian separatists, there was still a pluricentric Serbo-Croatian until the break-up of Yugoslavia, albeit one that was contested in some quarters.

Also, on p. 4, Voß states: "The Serbo-Croatian question, that is, the language question, was extremely politicised in the 1960s-1980s, but it was certainly not the central reason behind the collapse of the Yugoslav state." Here I wish to state my emphatic agreement. I draw attention to this because too many accounts attribute causality to language conflicts when in fact they were symptomatic of other processes.

On p. 5, as in the abstract, Voß describes the standardization of Macedonian (and Montenegrin) as "hesitant" and taking "between 10 and 20 years" (summarized as "slow" in the abstract). A crucial problem with this formulation is the fact that Voß does not supply any examples of "rapid" standardization. It is certainly true that Serbian impeded the standardization of Macedonian, but those impediments go back to the nineteenth century, when the Kingdom of Serbia turned its attention to what is now the Republic of North Macedonia and declared it to be Old Serbia (Gopčević 1889). Voß alludes to this fact on p. 6. I would add that the evidence of Pulevski (1875, 1880 [Book 9, chapters 4-5]) as well as Misirkov (1903) make it abundantly clear that attempts to create a standard Macedonian pre-date World War Two. One should also recall the dramas of writers such as Vasil Iljoski and Risto Krle, which were allowed to be performed in "dialect" in the 1920s and 1930s, were originally written in a language that ended up being quite close to the standard and not just in local dialect. Thus, it was not just the Komintern (p. 6) that was working toward a separate Macedonian language.



By 1944 there was complete consensus over the dialectal base of the standard such that at the first codification conference in December 1944, before Yugoslavia had yet been completely liberated from the Nazis, the attendees immediately agreed that West Central dialects should be the basis. Then, in true academic fashion, they spent the rest of the first session arguing over what label to use for those dialects (Central, Western, West Central, a-dialects, etc.; Friedman 2015: 311-329). In his account, Voß fails to mention that the first primer was published in 1945 (pop Eftimov et al. 1945) and the first high school grammar in 1946 (Kepeski 1946), the same year when a primer for teaching adult literacy also appeared (n.a. 1946). Thus the most basic tools for implementation were already in use more or less as soon as the War ended.

The description of Macedonian as L vis-à-vis Serbian as H on p. 5 is a bit misleading. It is certainly true that Serbian had higher status than Macedonian, and that it was the language of general communication until 1991. However, aside from the fact that, as mentioned above, this is no longer the case, the diglossic H/L relationship of the various languages that Ferguson (1959) first identified in his classic article on diglossia (Greek, Arabic, Swiss German, and Haitian Creole) was significantly different from the relationship of Serbian to Macedonian. Macedonian was used for all classic H functions within Macedonia, unlike the use of L varieties of the languages Ferguson was writing about.

On p. 6, Voß writes: “the Macedonian case took place in the period of High Stalinism, where positions deviant from the Party line were marginalised and eliminated.” While this is basically true, when it comes to a discussion of the codification of standard Macedonian, some nuancing is needed. Even within the Party there were conflicting visions of how the standardization of Macedonian should proceed, which is why the December 1944 codification conference failed and the May 1945 one succeeded. The conflict was between those who wanted to bring Russian linguists (S. B. Bernštejn and N. S. Deržavin) to Macedonia to “advise” them on how to formulate that standard, and Blaže Koneski and his allies, who insisted Macedonians could formulate their own standard without Russian interference. These would-be Russian codifiers and their allies also wanted to push the standard more in the direction of Bulgarian (and, therefore, Russian) both orthographically and grammatically. This is clearly seen in the manuscript of Bernštejn’s (as yet still unpublished) attempt at a normative grammar of Macedonian, which was completed in January 1948, a few months before the Tito-Stalin break (Nomachi 2019). It was that break that cemented Koneski’s position. Among other things, however, these facts show that not only Serbian but also Bulgarian and Russian represented challenges to the codification of Macedonian even during the 1944-1948 period.

On p. 7, Voß writes that Macedonian “was antipuristic as it reversed the puristic principles of Bulgarian.” This is not entirely true. As Koneski’s (1945) attack on the Turkisms used in the first translation of Molière’s *Le Tartuffe* performed in Skopje in October of that year make clear, the same sort of anti-Turkish puristic tendencies found in all the other Balkan standard languages were also at work in Macedonian (cf. Friedman 2005).

On p. 8, Voß notes that for Montenegrin “terminological work and corpus planning have yet to be initiated”, although on p. 13 he notes “[t]he appearance of the first volume of the *Rječnik Crnogorskog Narodnog i Književnog Jezika*, published by the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts in April, 2016,” which is arguably



an attempt at initiating corpus planning, albeit, as Voß notes there, contested. On p. 8, Voß's limitation of the "History of pre-standardization" to World War Two ignores earlier historical attempts adduced above (see in this respect Friedman 2001).

On pp. 8-9, concerning the events and policies 1952-1956, Voß writes that they "influenced the early stage of status planning in Skopje by the simple reproach of it being simply a Serbian variety", but this claim misses the fact that the Bulgarians began hurling that accusation the very same year that the Tito-Stalin break occurred in 1948 (Koneski 1948). Moreover, it is unclear how Bulgaria's specious claims influenced Macedonian language planning. Here two points can be adduced from the 1948 spelling reforms. First, although the 1945 *pravopis* specified only *a* as the reflex of the Common Slavic back nasal, the 1948 reforms allowed for *u* in certain words, despite the fact that this was also the Serbian reflex. The reasoning was that those individual lexical items that were already widely in use with *u* should be retained as such. This is consistent with Voß's identification of Macedonian anti-purism. The second change mandated the productive imperfectivizing suffix to be *-uva* rather than *-ue*. The former was actually consistent with the West Central dialectal base, while the latter, in addition to being "Serbian" was also the North (and in particular Skopje) reflex, and it was the one Venko Markovski, who was from Skopje, had insisted upon (see Friedman 2015: 311-329). The shift from *-ue* to *-uva* was thus not a simple distancing from Serbian but a move that made the standard more consistent with its dialectal base and moved it away from the dialect of a Macedonian whose native dialect happened to be closer to Serbian.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the Bulgarian boycott of OLA (the Common Slavic Linguistic Atlas) in 1982, referred to on p. 9, it is important to note that Bulgaria rejoined the project in 2005, with the explicit agreement of the Macedonian delegates (Marjan Markovikj and Angelina Pančevska). In fact, Bulgaria's returning to the OLA commission was an important point of cooperation between Macedonian and Bulgarian dialectologists until the then-director of the Institute for Bulgarian language retired. The new (and current) director has let loose the dogs of Bulgarian nationalism, foaming at the mouth that the Macedonian language is a dialect of Bulgarian (e.g., Ana Kočeva (<https://arhiva.republika.mk/849489>, [last accessed 24 October 2014] among others).

On p. 9, Voß writes: "On the other hand, Yugoslavia had managed to avoid its incorporation into the emerging Moscow-controlled Eastern bloc and received immediate support from the United States. Macedonia thus came to profit from the work of Harvard linguist Horace Lunt, who between 1948 and 1952 formulated the first normative Macedonian grammar in the US embassy in Belgrade. Thus, Macedonian was able to survive and even benefit from a radical political shift in world politics." This is an unfortunately worded passage and, in part, simply wrong. It is certainly true that Yugoslavia's separation from the Soviet bloc enabled a level of interchange with the West that would have been impossible otherwise at that time, and Lunt's visits to Macedonia were part of that. But to write that Horace "between 1948 and 1952 formulated the first normative Macedonian grammar in the US embassy in Belgrade" is simply false. In 1948, Lunt attended Frinta's lectures on the Macedonian standard at the Charles University in Prague. This was neither the beginning of his interest in Macedonian — which had been piqued by seeing standard

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<sup>1</sup> Markovski sided with Stalin at the time of the Tito-Stalin split, and after doing time on Goli Otok defected to Bulgaria and became a virulent opponent of standard Macedonian.



Macedonian publications in 1944 while stationed in Bari, Italy — nor was it the beginning of the writing of his grammar. I can note in passing that the fact that Macedonian could be the subject of a foreign university course only three years after the fixing of the orthography does not seem to me to be particularly slow progress. By 1947, Koneski had already published a brief description of Standard Macedonian, and, as already noted, Kepeski's high school grammar had been published in 1946 (and a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 1947). Horace met Blaže Koneski at a Slavic seminar in 1950, and Blaže invited him to Skopje, where Horace spent May-July 1951. In addition to Koneski, Božo Vidoeski and Rada Ugrinova — both students at the time — were of great help to him. So was Koneski's mother, whose language Lunt included in his description. Lunt wrote his grammar during the academic year 1951-1952, while he was an assistant professor at Harvard, not in the US embassy in Belgrade. Horace did the typing himself while at Harvard. The full text was sent to Macedonia in May 1952, and typesetting began in June in Belgrade. Lunt then spent four weeks in Belgrade, with three or four quick visits to Skopje, reading proof and verifying data so that the book was completed in record time and published in August 1952. Aside from the inaccurate formulation of where and when the grammar was written, calling Lunt's the "first normative grammar" is problematic. First, despite all its shortcomings, Kepeski's grammar had the explicit aim of teaching a norm. It was not an *academic* normative grammar, but it was a normative grammar. Second, what Lunt was doing was *describing* the standard language — and in an explicitly structuralist framework, at that. This raises an interesting question: can a descriptive grammar be non-normative if the language it is describing is the norm? Here, perhaps, we need to distinguish between *normative* and *prescriptive*. Koneski's grammar, the first half of which (phonology) was published the same year as Lunt's, did indeed prescribe rules, but Lunt was only attempting to describe them. In any case, Macedonia did indeed benefit from the shift in world politics. Thanks to Lunt's 1951 article on the Macedonian verb, he convinced the codifiers to use the 3sg as the base form, rather than the opaque 1sg (see Friedman 2015: 415-418 for details and references).

Unfortunately, the attacks of the neo-nationalist, anti-Yugoslav Macedonians on Koneski did not begin in the early 21st century (p. 9). Rather, they began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, while Koneski was still alive. Risteski (1988) was an indirect attack on Koneski, but by the early 1990s, the right-wing press was full of direct attacks accusing Koneski of "Serbianizing" Macedonian. The chief focus of these attacks was the exclusion of Ъ from Macedonian Cyrillic. I have discussed these details elsewhere (Friedman 1998), so I will not rehearse them here. Note that while the graphemes ќ и were indeed newly formulated, s was taken from the Church Slavonic tradition. It should also be noted that the (specifically and not "inter-dialectal") West Macedonian tri-partite definite article is not a Balkan Sprachbund feature but rather specific to West Macedonian. Although tripartite article distinctions did develop elsewhere (parts of Torlak and in the Rhodopes, among others), they are all Slavic and not shared with the other Balkan languages, none of which have such a tri-partite distinction in the postposed definite article. The regularity of object reduplication is also specifically West Macedonian (in the East, as in colloquial [but not standard] Bulgarian, it is pragmatically conditioned). Voß is quite right to identify the (usually) fixed antepenultimate stress as particularly salient, and the 'have' perfect, which in West Macedonian is indeed of Romance origin (Goľab 1984: 15). A key point, however, is



that all these features are firmly based in a specific group of Macedonian dialects. It is perhaps, worth noting here that the standardization of the ‘have’ perfect has been so successful that even the oldest generation in Berovo (far eastern Macedonia) now uses it in everyday speech.

Voß (p. 9) focuses on Tolstoj’s 1961 dictionary for an impression of Macedonian vocabulary building in the 1950s. A better choice might have been the extensive lexicon in Lunt’s 1952 grammar (c. 6,000 words), which, based as it was on the literature published at that time, in addition to being the first lexicon of its kind, actually reflected a descriptive approach. One last comment for this page: the three-volume Macedonian dictionary was published 1961-1966. Given Voß’s themes of slowness and hesitancy, the modern reader should be aware that — aside from the fact that in the 1950s, as in the 1850s, dictionary compilation depended on little slips of paper and not computers — the terrible Skopje earthquake of 26 July 1963, whose epicenter was right in the middle of Skopje, significantly delayed the completion of the dictionary.

At the bottom of p. 10 Voß writes: “To sum up, the equidistance of Macedonian to Serbian and Bulgarian is not realised in the lexicon but has to be seen as the combination of a densely serbified vocabulary with a Balkan-Slavic morphosyntax.” First, in terms of phonology, the West Central dialectal base is closer to Serbian than Bulgarian, and this is clearly the result of pre-Ottoman medieval factors. The characterization of Macedonian vocabulary as “densely serbified” is only valid if Bulgarian vocabulary is characterized as “densely russified”. Choose your poison. As for “Balkan-Slavic morphosyntax”, both Bulgarian and Macedonian standards exhibit many of the same basic features, as do the South Serbian dialects discussed by Stanković & Stefanović (see below). The point really is that standard Bulgarian is based on the northeast Bulgarian dialects, i.e. those furthest from Macedonian, and already in the 19th century this gave rise to speakers from western Macedonia championing their own dialects as the basis of a standard language. However, it is true that those western Macedonian dialects show a higher degree of consistency in Balkan morphosyntactic convergences than Torlak and northeast Bulgarian.

The statement (p. 13) that Montenegrin discourses of victimization by Serbian being similar to those in Macedonia since 1998 is in need of modification. While I do not doubt the similarity, those discourses began in Macedonia in 1988, as Yugoslavia headed toward its break-up. They were, in fact, symptomatic of things to come (cf. Voß’s point, cited above, that such debates were not causes but symptoms). An interview with Trajko Stamatovski (then director of the Institute for Macedonian Language) in the 8 June 1988 edition of *Lik* touched off an acrimonious debate about, among other things, the status of Macedonian vis-à-vis its relationship to Serbo-Croatian. Parts of that debate were reprinted or published for the first time in Koteski (1989). What Voß describes (quite accurately) as “megalomaniacal myths of antiquity” — known to its opponents in North Macedonia as *bucephalism* (a sarcastic reference to Alexander the Great’s horse) — surely have similarities. In the Macedonian case, however, they were provoked by Greece’s successful blocking of the Republic of Macedonia’s access to international organizations with the claim that only it had the right to the name. This resulted, among other things, in the claim that Modern Macedonian is not a Slavic language and also in a spurious “reading” of the middle section of the Rosetta Stone as Macedonian (see Ilievski 2006/2008 — who is writing



against such nonsense — and sources cited therein). Presumably the Montenegrin version has similarities, but do they go so far as to claim Montenegrin is not Slavic but pre-Romance?

At the end of that paragraph, Voß writes: “The new standard as codified in 2009 has not been accepted by all of its potential speakers, so that the ultimate nature and status of the Montenegrin language remains an unresolved issue.” This is clearly quite different from standard Macedonian, which, a decade after the first codification conference of 1944 had already produced an academic grammar in the language, a modest orthographic dictionary, four years of an academic journal (*Makedonski jazik*), and a generation educated in the standard language, including five published B. A. theses (*diplomni raboti*) and other linguistic publications (Vidoeski 1950; Koneska 1951; Tahovski 1951; Ugrinova 1951; Filiposka 1952; Mihajlov 1954).

It is certainly true that the position of Serbian has been a challenge for both languages, although I do not see how the success of Macedonian codification can be described as “slow” and the fact that there were some changes in the details during the first 10 years after the declaration of 2 August 1944 does not seem any different from changes occurring in the developments of other standard languages that were allowed to do so in the 19th century. One of the crucial differences between Standard Macedonian and Standard Montenegrin is that Standard Macedonian is based on a dialect complex that is very different from the one on which Standard Serbian is based, while, as Voß (p. 12) observes, Standard Montenegrin did not make use of its distinctive southeastern (Zeta-Lovćen) dialects (which, it should be noted, extend into the Sandžak as far as Novi Pazar in southwesternmost Serbia and almost to Mitrovica in Kosovo), but rather chose the same neo-štokavian ijekavian that was the basis of Vuk’s language. This same problem applies to some extent to Croatian and Bosnian, neither of which is based on the distinctive dialects of their current nation states (e.g., čakavian for Croatian, ikavian štokavian for Bosnian) but rather on the very neo-štokavian ijekavian that Vuk used, albeit now with different vocabulary. It may well be that the signatories to the “Deklaracija o zajedničkom jeziku” (declaration of a common language) are politically naïve, but dialectologically, they have a point.

### **3. Peeling the onion top-down: Language policy in Serbia between power and myth by Branimir Stanković & Marija Stefanović**

Stanković & Stefanović’s article dissects the effects of post-break-up Serbian language policy on speakers of the southernmost (Torlak) Serbian dialect using the theories of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu based his theorizing on the situation in France, where, in the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a centralizing state destroyed the use of minority languages and dialects as part of its educational campaign to create a linguistically homogenized nation-state (Weber 1976: 67-94). While these theories are not universally applicable to all standard languages, the framework does work well for many situations, including the situation in Serbia vis-à-vis the Torlak dialects, and the authors do an excellent job of demonstrating this. My comments here will therefore be aimed at amplifying what the authors are saying by adducing additional material. Focusing as they do on Bourdieu’s conception of power relations, the authors could enrich their analysis with references to Gal & Irvine (1995) and Irvine & Gal (2000), who discuss the semiotic processes — indexicality, iconicity,



and fractal recursion — by means of which these power relations are created and enforced. They all apply to the Torlak situation.

Another point worth making is that the Torlak dialect, which is the focus of Stanković & Stefanović's analysis, holds a very special place within Serbian dialectology for both historical and linguistic reasons. As a linguistic system, aside from questions of power relations, Torlak is quite distinct from the rest of the former Serbo-Croatian (henceforth FSC) on many points that are quite salient for speakers themselves. It is unique among FSC dialects in not having vocalic length, in having completely replaced the infinitive with subordinate clauses in *da*, in realizing strong jers as schwa — a vowel that does not occur in the rest of FSC — instead of /a/, preservation of /l/ where the rest of FSC has /o/ or /u/, the future marker is an invariant particle (or at most has a distinct 1sg form) as opposed to being conjugated in the rest of FSC, the eastern dialects have a post-posed definite article, and all of Torlak has a smaller inventory of cases than the rest of FSC. As the authors note (p. 31), although without explanation, Torlak shares with the dialects of southern Montenegro and adjacent parts of the Sandžak as well as parts of Slavonia the fact of being “old štokavian”, which refers to the fact that, unlike the great majority of FSC dialects, they did not undergo an accent shift toward the beginning of the word. This means that, unlike the neo-štokavian dialects (the term refers to the neo-štokavian accent shift), these dialects can have final stress, which is extremely salient to neo-štokavian speakers, who never have it.

In fact, although FSC has many distinctive dialects, the features of Torlak are so different from most of FSC that in one of his descriptions of štokavian, Ivić (1958) actually gave Torlak a separate status on the same level as the (other) three major divisions of FSC: štokavian, čakavian, and kajkavian (each named for the respective dialect group's word for ‘what’, which serves as emblematic for other distinctions). And on this basis, he omitted Torlak from that edition of his description of štokavian. (He had included Torlak in Ivić 1956 and included it again in subsequent editions). It is also worth noting that Torlak's position on the South Slavic dialect continuum is transitional to Macedonian and Bulgarian, i.e. many of the features that distinguish Torlak from the rest of FSC are shared with those two languages, and the Torlak zone (like Macedonia) was the site of Bulgarian claims in the 19th century, and Bulgarian occupation during World Wars One and Two. Moreover, the dialects are still claimed as Bulgarian by Bulgarian dialectologists (Kočev 2001; Tetovska-Troeva 2016). Thus, the direction of Serbian puristic anxieties at the Torlak dialects has a very specific set of histories and circumstances.

With these facts in mind, the post-break-up 1997 Serbian Language Standardization Committee can be seen not just as a selfish power play by otherwise marginalized intellectual elites, but also as an expression of anxiety created by loss and fear of further loss (as pointed out by the authors in their quoting the claim of ‘balkanization’). The *негујемо српски језик* ‘Let's nurture the Serbian language’ campaign (p. 24&ff.) was on prominent display during the XVI International Congress of Slavists in Belgrade in August 2018. All participants were given white t-shirts with that motto emblazoned on the front in bold blue letters. Some participants from abroad even wore them, as did all the students who were working as aides.

The authors make their points well, and they also invite comparisons that need to be made in the future. The other old štokavian dialects are mostly spoken outside



of the current Serbian state, sometimes, but not always, by people who identify as Serbs or who are now living in Serbia after the displacements of the wars. Do they experience the same levels of intolerance? And an especially interesting question will be to compare the experiences of speakers of čakavian and kajkavian in Croatia. Those dialects are spoken only in Croatia, although linguistically kajkavian — which includes Zagreb — is transitional to Slovene. They have been valorized as distinctively Croatian, and each also has its own literature, despite the fact that the Croatian standard, like all the FSC standards, is štokavian. So how does this play out in practice?

#### **4. Rediscovering the border region in linguistics: Cases from Southeastern Europe**

**by Lumnije Jusufi**

In this article, Jusufi examines ethnolinguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of the language situation in Debar (Albanian Dibra [definite]), which she describes in terms of borders. I can note here in passing that Jusufi is the editor of an important new collection of articles dealing primarily with Albanian pluricentrism (Jusufi 2018), and Elliott (2017) is a valuable recent addition to the literature on Kosovo. Jusufi's article examines language attitudes of Albanian speakers of different generations on two sides of what is now an international border between the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Albania. It is a useful introduction to border linguistics, and it also makes clear how much more work can be done in this interesting area. Thus, as a supplement to the data given in Jusufi's article, in this commentary I shall supply some historical background that helps complicate the picture.

Although Jusufi's article is, as she states, focused on the Albanian context, in fact linguistically Debar is a highly complex multilingual border region with a history that is unique in the context of the Ottoman Empire. During the Ottoman period, Turkish was the prestige town language in almost every municipal center in the territory that is now North Macedonia, and Albanian was one of the languages of the countryside in the west. In Debar, however, Albanian and Macedonian (in modern terms) were the town languages, and Turkish was a village language (as were Albanian and Macedonian). In 1900 the town of Debar was roughly 2/3 Albanian and close to 1/3 Macedonian, with Romani making up the remainder (Kăncov 1900: 259). Thus, the lack of prestige for Turkish among the older generation is arguably the result of the older town/country divide, and members of the oldest generation of Debar residents have been explicit in this valuation in their conversations with me.

It is also important to note here that historically Debar has been a bilingual town, with all the townspeople knowing both Albanian and Macedonian. This tradition has had distinct effects on both the local Albanian and local Macedonian dialects. In the case of Debar Albanian, it is unique among Geg dialects in having no nasal vowels, and almost unique in extending the 2sg marker *-sh* from the subjunctive to the indicative in most verbs. (The nearby village of Tërbaç, in Golo Brdo/Golloborda on the Albanian side of the border, shows a similar development; Gjinari et al. 2007: 129-136). Both of these developments are distinct results of Albanian/Macedonian mutual bilingualism.

Finally, it should be noted that despite various fluctuations, the Debar/Dibra/Debre region remains complexly multilingual, although some details of the proportions have changed with time. In 1900, the Ottoman *kaza* of Dibre-i-Bâlâ (Upper Debar), i.e. the town with its villages, had no linguistic majority, being roughly 47% Macedonian, 44% Albanian, with the remainder made up of Turkish and Romani



(Kǎnčov 1900: 283). In 1971, the Debar district in Macedonia was one of only two districts with no linguistic majority (the other was Kičevo). Over the years, the linguistic profile has changed, especially after 1991, and these changes themselves are worthy of further elucidation. On p. 49, Jusufi provides a map of the Debar region, and I shall close here with a different sort of map. This one is taken from Vidoeski's (1998: 213-244) article on the Macedonian dialects of the Debar region (the names of the villages can be found in Vidoeski 1998: 213-214; I have modified the labeling slightly). The map is based on census and ethnographic data from the 1930s to 1961 (see Vidoeski 1998). As can be seen, the linguistic complexities are worthy of more investigation.



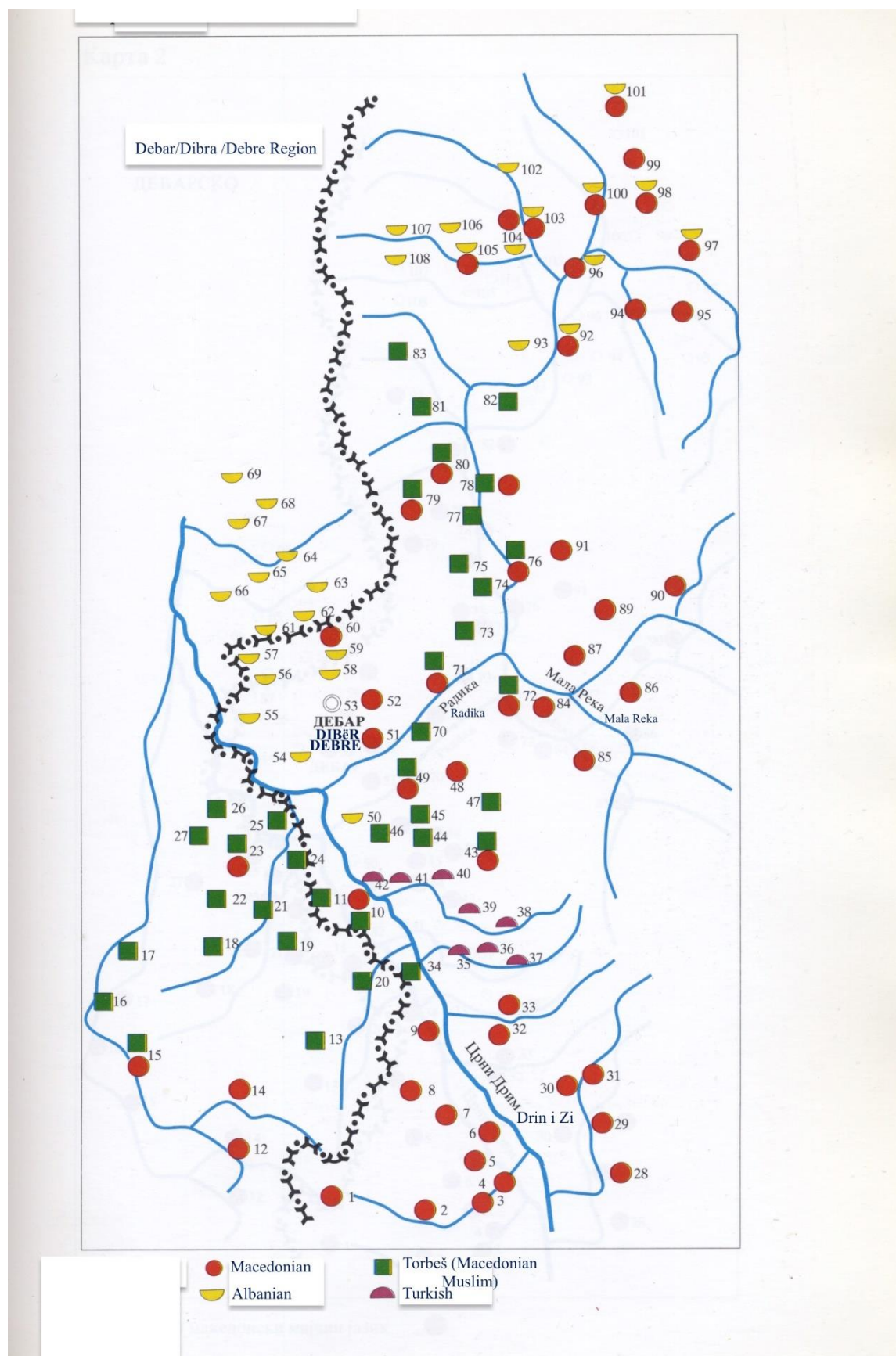


Fig. 1 Ethnolinguistic Map of the Debar/Dibra/Debre Region (Vidoeski 1998)



### 5. Languages of loss and mourning beyond (the) borders: Bosnia by Snežana Stanković

Stanković's is a very different kind of paper from the others in the volume. It is about the use of language to commemorate loss. The paper is concerned primarily with a Bosnian women's embroidery project in Berlin and gives moving and striking images from that project as well as various sites of commemoration. Among the issues raised are the commemoration of the missing, individual and collective mourning, monuments and cemeteries, especially in the shadow of the Srebrenica genocide and the war in Bosnia in general. The author also adduces examples from Bosnia itself, as well as unknown soldier monuments and the Yad Vashem memorial to the Holocaust. In this commentary I would like to add an additional example of commemorating the missing.



Fig. 2 Memorial to Holocaust victims, Brăila, Romania

Figure 2 was taken in the Jewish cemetery of Brăila in southeastern Romania. The inscription reads: *ACI S-A INHUMAT SAPUNUL FABRICAT DE FIARELE NAZISTE DIN GRASIMEA EVREILOR OMORIȚI DE EI IN ANII HOLOCAUSTULUI* 'Here has been buried the soap manufactured by the Nazi beasts from the fat of Jews murdered by them in the years of the Holocaust'. Above the inscription are the Hebrew letters נ (nun) and פ (pe), a standard Hebrew funerary abbreviation for *po nikbar* 'Here lies'. This is a very specific type of monument, testifying to the very specific nature of the Nazi genocide. While the genocide at Srebrenica — like most other genocides of the twentieth century, from that of the Armenians onward — involved mass murder, the Nazis were, perhaps, unique in the industrial use to which they put their murders. The languages of this



monument are also significant. For Jewish tombstones, Hebrew, being the sacred language, is normal. By having the main inscription in Romanian, it is 'legible' to Romanians, should they visit the cemetery.

Unfortunately, in addition to being sites of remembrance, cemeteries are also sites of vulnerability. Sometimes the 'beasts' will not let the dead rest in peace but rather signal a threat to the living through desecration of the dead.



Fig. 3 The Jewish Cemetery in Huși, Romania, April 2019

Thus, just two weeks before I finished this commentary, BBC reported the desecration of Jewish graves in Huși, a town about 190 kilometers due north of Brăila, close to the border with Moldova (McGrath 2019). The anti-Semites wrecked 73 graves in the cemetery, an act that clearly required significant time and energy. And so, the remnants of a murdered people continue to be confronted with the forces of evil. One is left to wonder: What kind of knowledge can be produced that would actually counter such forces?

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