

BEITRÄGE

Balkan borderline phenomena through the prism of areal linguistics¹

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1. Introductory theoretical considerations

1.1 The term *area* – domains of application

The term *area* came into circulation with the appearance of *linguistic geography* – nowadays mainly called *areal linguistics* – which is an exact equivalent of M. Bartoli's term *linguistica spaziale* (but in the 1930s he used *linguistica areale*). Ferdinand de Saussure used *geographic linguistics* with the same meaning. Of all these synonymous, I prefer *areal linguistics* because of its diachronic content (Эдельман 1968: 3–4 quoted after Серебрянников 1973: 121).

1.2 The term *area* from a genetic and a typological perspective

In classical linguistic geography (M. Bartoli, B. Terracini, G. Bonfante, G. Devoto, A. Dauzat, V. Pisani etc.) the term *area* is applied to the evolution of genetically related languages (Indo-European, in particular Romance languages). A language area is identifiable in two ways – chronologically and spatially. While the historical aspect is intangible, the spatial one is visible to every native speaker, because time is less concrete than space².

In research on the Balkan convergence area (*Balkan Sprachbund*), to be referred to here as the Balkan linguistic league, the spatial principle prevails. This prevalence is justified by the object of study itself – a linguistic league is an areal-typological unity, while a language family is a genetic unity. In a genetic unity, the main process of evolution is divergence (one language evolves into several languages); in a linguistic league, convergence among the respective member languages is achieved through prolonged language contact.

1.3 *Area* and linguistic continuity

A language represents a continuity of dialects, gradually changing from one to another. Languages of the same family also feature gradual transitions from one to another. Ninety years ago N. S. Trubetzkoy noticed that languages genealogically un-

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2 Cf. SAUSSURE 1974: 271: «On oublie le facteur temps, parce qu'il est moins concret que l'espace; mais en réalité, c'est de lui que relève la différenciation linguistique. La diversité géographique doit être traduite en diversité temporelle.»

related but geographically contiguous are grouped on the basis of common features, into so-called “linguistic leagues” (“языковые союзы”). Moreover, not only languages may form linguistic leagues, but also language families located within the same geographical and cultural-historical area, for instance the Ural-Altai linguistic league (the Finno-Ugric, Turkic, Mongolian, and Manchurian language families) and the Mediterranean linguistic league (consisting of the Indo-European, Hamito-Semitic and North-Caucasian language families). Thus, all languages of the globe, according to N. S. Trubetzkoy, constitute a kind of unbroken chain linking one unit to another (Трубецкой 1990: 156–157).

Leaning on these ideas, we will interpret the *border of two areas* in relative terms, and not as a rigid and categorical boundary.

In its day, classical linguistic geography concluded that the boundaries between languages do not coincide with state borders, for example, certain aspects of the north Italian dialects resemble the French and the Provençal languages (ROHLFS 1947: 13–15, quoted from Серебренников 1973: 127). More recently V. Friedman, having in mind the South Slavic dialects, also pointed out that the political boundaries of several states “do not correspond in any significant way to the major dialect divisions” (FRIEDMAN 1999: 15, quoted after ALEXANDER 2000: 1). Indeed, as R. Alexander said: “linguistic landscapes existed long before the boundaries of modern nation-states were imposed on these landscapes” (ALEXANDER 2000: 4). This assertion is true of the entire Balkan area. (Nevertheless, states may not coincide with linguistic territories, but they are in general formed around the cores of linguistic territories.)

In this paper the Balkan area will be discussed on the basis of dialects, because contact among the Balkan languages, especially in the past, was maintained orally.

2. The complete Balkan area from the perspective of Bartoli's (1925) spatial norms (*norme areali / spaziali*)³

2.1 Norm of the lateral areas, the case of Bulgarian

During the colonization of the Balkans in the fifth century AD, Slavs reached the periphery of the Slavic world, concomitantly finding themselves at the heart of the Balkan space. The Bulgarian language occupies the eastern- and the southernmost borders of the South Slavic territory. M. Bartoli's spatial norm of the lateral areas is dis-

3 Based on the study of Romance dialects M. Bartoli identified five types of correlation between the chronology of linguistic facts and their areal characteristics called by him *norme areali* to emphasize that these are statistical tendencies rather than rules or actual laws: *norma delle aree laterali*, (norm of the lateral areas) – dialects in the periphery do not always participate in innovations radiating from the center (1925: 6); *norma dell'area meno esposta* (norm of the less exposed area) – dialects in isolated areas are as a rule more conservative (1925: 3); *norma dell'area maggiore* (norm of the more extended area) – the longer the lifespan of a linguistic fact, the wider the territory in which it is displayed (1925: 10); *norma dell'area seniore* (norm of the older area) – when a language variety is spoken in new territories, as in colonies for instance, it may stop participating in innovations, stemming from the center, and may preserve features lost in the old country (1925: 13); *norma della fase soprafatta* (norm of the superseded stage) – a phenomenon completely ousted by another in a given territory is the older one (1925: 15) (cf. Бояджиев 1996).

proved by the Southeast and East Slavic periphery: it is innovative rather than archaic. The closer to the edge of the Southeast and East Slavic periphery, the more pronounced the innovations: Bulgarian presents the most evolved form of a Slavic language. Innovations that separate it from the Slavic language type, such as analyticity in the noun system, definite article, object reduplication (clitic doubling), replacement of the infinitive, future and conditional forms of a Balkan type, etc., coexist with classical Indo-European archaisms – rich temporal and modal systems, marked by the vitality of simple past tenses (aorist and imperfect), which have disappeared in the central Slavic zones. In its territory the genetic Slavic area and the typological Balkan area are superimposed.

In this manner, as a Slavic periphery, Bulgarian has kept certain archaic features (Bartoli's spatial norm of the lateral areas), but, on the other hand, Bulgarian represents the core of the Balkan area from a geographical as well as a linguistic point of view. Bulgarian is a kind of a "Grundform" (E. Seidel) of the Balkan linguistic league; it is there that the so-called balkanisms are fully represented.

[To some extent Serbo-Croatian shares the same features (without analyticity and the active use of the simple past tenses). The transition from the Slavic to the Balkan area encompasses to some extent the Serbo-Croatian language territory.]

In terms of the center/periphery relationships, the Southwestern Balkans (including approximately Southwestern Macedonia, Southern Albania and Epirus, territories in which Southern Albanian, Southwestern Bulgarian, Northern Greek and Aromanian are spoken – cf. GOŁĄB 1962: 141; АСЕНОВА 1989: 12–13, 2002: 17; FRIEDMAN 2008: 135) emerge as the center of the Balkan area, where the main balkanisms are densely concentrated (predominantly innovations, but also archaisms), for example:

- high frequency of object reduplication (clitic doubling);
- replacement of the infinitive with the conjunctive;
- prevalence of the aorist over the perfect (as the main tense in narrations about past events);
- conditional mood formed with the future-tense morpheme plus the imperfect (as in Gr. *θα έγραφα*, Alb. *do (të) hapja*).

2.2 Norm of the less exposed area, the case of Romanian

The situation of Romanian among the Romance languages is comparable to the situation of Bulgarian among the Slavic languages. But Romanian not only occupies the periphery of *Romania*, it is isolated from the other Romance languages and surrounded by Slavic languages and Hungarian. Romanian is the perfect example of an isolated Romance area, governed by Bartoli's *norma dell'area meno esposta alle comunicazione*, according to which in it the archaic state of affairs should be better preserved.

Indeed, Romanian has preserved certain features of Latin grammar that have been lost elsewhere. One Latin element, having disappeared from other Romance languages, has survived in Romanian; this is the morphological case differentiation. Romanian uses two nominal cases: direct (nominative-accusative) and oblique (genitive-dative). (By lagging behind Romance evolutions, Romanian at the same time fails to

display the level of analyticity shown by other Balkan languages). Romanian conservatism is visible in the ongoing use of such Indo-European archaisms as the vocative form (considered to be due to Slavic or Greek influence). I would not accept as a feature, preserved from Latin, the retention of the neuter gender in nouns: some linguists have argued that this pattern was in a sense “re-invented” rather than a direct continuation of the Latin neuter.

In its innovations Romanian remains a peculiar Romance type – it has developed at variance with other Romance languages: one peculiarity of Romanian (including Aromanian, Megleno-Romanian, Istro-Romanian) is that, unlike all other Romance languages, the definite article is attached to the end of nouns, as in Bulgarian and Albanian, instead of being pre-posed. Future-tense forms, as well as the conditional mood formation, share the Balkan isomorphism in contrast with all other Romance languages, where morphologically identical material is organized in a manner that is typologically completely different.

Thus, compared with the other Romance languages, Romanian is, as expected, archaic. Although it does not take the center of the Balkan area (and is not even geographically located in the Balkans), Romanian displays the main innovative balkanisms.

2.3 *Western and southern peripheries of the Balkan area, the cases of Albanian and Greek*

What about the other members of the Balkan linguistic league – Albanian and Greek? These two languages predate the others in the Balkans, each representing a separate Indo-European branch. Their evolution can be analyzed only within the Indo-European framework, regardless of the opinion that there can be no balkanisms inherited from the Indo-European.

Since ancient times, Greek and Albanian, having inherent genetic links, have also established historical contacts. As a consequence, they possess Indo-European archaisms, absent in the other Balkan languages. I will indicate the following two:

1. Formation of a non-active diathesis: In Greek and Albanian the pronominal marker characterizing the non-active diathesis is incorporated into the composition of the verb form as flexion, so that we have to do with a grammaticalized syntagm. As a result, in Greek the active and non-active conjugations are morphologically opposed in all tenses (present *δένω/δένομαι*; imperfect *έδενα/δενόμουν*; aorist *έδεσα/δέθηκα*; conjunctive mood *να δέσω/να δεθώ*; etc.), and in Albanian – in the present (*laj/la-hem*) and in the imperfect (*la-ja/la-hesha*).
2. Forms of the third-person personal pronouns: In all Balkan (and Indo-European) languages the third-person pronouns are closely related in form to the demonstrative pronouns. This link ensues from the nature of the grammatical category ‘person’, which places the third person outside of the act of communication. The incomplete separation of demonstratives from third-person pronouns comes to the fore in the history of different languages. However, at present in Greek and in Albanian, genuine demonstrative pronouns are used as third-person personal pronouns. In Albanian this role is performed by the distal demonstrative pronoun *ai/ay, ajo, ata, ato* ‘that’, whereas in Greek the basic form of the third-person

personal pronoun is the proximal demonstrative pronoun *αυτός* lit. ‘this’, but the distal demonstrative pronoun *ἐκεῖνος* lit. ‘that’ is in use too.

3. Border of two *internal areas*, the case of isolated Balkan dialects

3.1 Balkan languages do not form compact areas (cf. 1.3); they interpenetrate each other: dialects of one Balkan language spread into the territory of another Balkan language. Usually such dialects outside the political borders keep areal continuity with the language to which they belong genetically and represent its periphery. Sometimes, as a result of migration, dialects get to be completely isolated from the integral territory of the respective language. In both cases they are generally characterized by conservatism.

[Examples are the preservation of some case forms and the triple definite article in Southern and Southwestern Bulgarian dialects in the district of the Xanthi-Rhodope Mountains in Greece, in the region of Gora, Golo Bordo, Korça in Albania which are adjacent to territories where the same language is spoken; and the preservation of the archaic clusters *kl'*, *gl'* instead of *q*, *gj* in the Southern Albanian dialect of the village Mandrica in Bulgaria, territorially separated from the main Albanian-speaking zone as a result of migration from the region of Korça. Let us also add here the case of the Albanian dialect of Istria, which disappeared in the mid-nineteenth century: characteristic features of the preserved texts point at several regions in northern Albania as its old homeland (АЈЕТИ 1972: 8). The list of such examples can be continued.]

3.2 At present, rare examples of bilingualism in the Balkans persist in the borderline zones in-between Balkan areas. Each of these Balkan dialects (conventionally termed here “isolated”) exists in contact with another Balkan language having the same typological features.

In the “spatial grammar of the Balkan linguistic league”, an isolated dialect belongs together with other Balkan languages to the *exoteric* space of its respective language. But on the diachronic axis such an isolated dialect and the language of which it is part share the same *esoteric* history (cf. ЦИВЬЯН 2005: 213).

At the border of two internal areas archaic features appear mixed with innovations. Generally innovations coincide with features common to the two languages in contact, namely with balkanisms. Archaisms, as well as innovations can be attributed to two alternative factors: the influence of the foreign-language environment or the development of internal resources. *Mutatis mutandis*, in V. Friedman’s words concerning the Balkan Slavic dialects, we could argue that isolated Balkan dialects are “at the intersection of internal developments and external contacts” (FRIEDMAN 2008: 131).

The distinction of these two alternatives should be the goal of linguistic study. At first glance, innovations seem to be triggered by external contacts, and archaisms are usually attributed to the conservatism of the periphery. However, linguistic reality is more complex. First, a linguistic phenomenon can be defined as an archaism or an innovation using two criteria: *spatial* and *historical*.

In Bartoli’s framework, according to the norm of the *more extended area*, archaisms take up broader spaces, whereas innovations, the so-called balkanisms, concen-

trate at the center of the Balkan linguistic league (a relatively limited space, see 2.1). As one gradually moves away from this center, balkanisms become less pervasive.

The historical criterion is based on the testimony of written historical documents. The evolution of some innovations such as the future-tense forms, the conditionalis irrealis forms or the clitic doubling of the object and others, are attested well throughout the history of Greek and Bulgarian.

3.3. Innovations or archaisms, which appeared in analogous conditions of bilingualism, can receive two opposing explanations: either as contact-induced or as a result of internal development. Let us take two examples:

1) The status of analyticity

In Wallachian dialects of Romanian, spoken in northern Bulgaria, analyticity is more advanced than in mainstream Romanian: possession is usually expressed with the prepositions *la/a* or *de*, for ex. *soacra la fata mea* ‘mother-in-law of my daughter’. The fact can be explained as contact-induced in the process of bilingualism with analytical Bulgarian. On the other side of the state border in Serbia, the same Wallachian dialect presents the same degree of analyticity as in Bulgaria, for example, *Cuada de o vulpiie e lungă* ‘A fox tail is long’, literally ‘The tail of the fox is long’ (PETROVIĆ-RIGNAULT 2008: 132–133); however, analyticity in this case cannot be attributed to the influence of synthetic Serbian.

More convincing is the explanation of the phenomenon in both locations as a manifestation of the specificity of the Romanian dialects in Muntenia and Oltenia, characterized by an analytical expression of possession, because the isolated dialects in Bulgaria and Serbia are of Muntenian-Oltenian type (Neagoe, MĂRGĂRIT 2006: LI, LXXXVI).

The prepositional possessive construction instead of a genitival one is common in the Greek dialects of Karakachans in Bulgaria as well, for example, *i mana sta gzan'am* ‘the mother of my children’. On the other hand, in parallel historical conditions – long-standing contact with an analytical language – Greek in Southern Italy uses the Genitive to express the indirect object:

<i>na tos ta</i>	<i>ípi</i>	<i>tomparént^bo</i>
que Pr3pl.+Gén. Pr3pl.+Acc.	dire-3 déf.	parents+Gén.

«... qu'il leur en parle (*litt.* qu'il les leur dise) aux parents» (KATSOYANNOU 1995: 172)⁴

This function of the Genitive case is taken over by a prepositional construction (preposition *σε* + accusative) not only in Greek dialects spoken in Bulgaria, but also in vernacular Greek in Greece. So, the influence of the environment prevailed in Greek dialects in Bulgaria, but the conservatism of the periphery determined the state of affairs in Italy.

4 Usage confirmed by Valeria Baldissera (University of Ca'Foscari, Venice), personal communication.

2) Prevalence of the aorist over the perfect

The vitality of the aorist is one of the few balkanisms, with the status of archaisms, not shared by Romanian. While the high frequency of the simple past (*perfectul simplu*) in a Romanian dialect spoken in Bulgaria could be explained by Bulgarian influence, in Serbia Wallachian-Serbian bilingualism could not have played an analogous role because the perfect is preferred in Serbian. Moreover, under Serbian influence, younger Wallachian speakers use only the compound perfect (*perfectul compus*) (PETROVIĆ-RIGNAULT 2008: 216). The spread of the simple past tense in Romanian dialects to the south of the Danube represents an areal continuity of the dialect zone of active use of *perfectul simplu* which includes Southern Banat, Oltenia, Southwestern Muntenia, etc. (NEAGOE/MĂRGĂRIT 2006: XCVIII).

3.4 Applying the historical criterion, we can discern whether a phenomenon is due to external influence or to internal development.

V. Friedman assumed that the generalization of the marker *-e* in the plural of the Common Slavic *-l* participle (*napravile, bile*), in Standard Macedonian and the western dialects, is perhaps the result of Aromanian influence in the contact between the two languages. However, he referred to Koneski's statement that this innovation "begins to appear already in the twelfth-thirteenth century in Ohrid texts" (FRIEDMAN 2008a).

In fact, replacement of the ending *-li* by *-le* characterizes Middle Bulgarian written texts originating both from Ohrid (*Bologna Psalter, Grigorovič parimeynik, Ohrid Apostle* from the 12th century) and from Central Bulgaria (*Parable of Troy*, composed around 1230 in Veliko Tărnovo).

Nowadays the phenomenon is widespread in all Bulgarian dialects – western and eastern. Nevertheless, due to the strong vowel reduction in the eastern dialects in which unstressed word-final *-e* sounds identical with *-i* and Russian influence, the ending *-le* was not adopted in Standard Bulgarian (Мирчев 1963: 217).

Most likely, the causes of the described phenomena are complex: it may happen that the system of a foreign language with which isolated Balkan dialects are in contact stimulate internally motivated archaisms or innovations.

4. Possible conclusions

I am convinced that the described framework of borderline linguistic phenomena can be very productive for the study of the Balkan linguistic league. It shows the following:

- 1) The linguistic periphery can be more innovative than the center. In the periphery innovations co-exist with archaisms.
- 2) In the Balkans one can discern no areas featuring exclusively archaisms or innovations; rather old and new phenomena coexist as a mosaic.
- 3) Balkan linguists should pay special attention to the internal transitional areas in the Balkans (the so-called isolated dialects). Their importance consists first of all in the possibility to observe *interference in use*. Many such areas of intensive contact among languages with *different sociolinguistic status* exist around the globe, witnessing processes similar to pidginization and creolization. The Balkan

languages should be viewed as participants in these universal processes (Эдельман 2004: 382, emphasis mine, P.A.).

At the border of two internal areas the acquisition of common Balkan linguistic features (“balkanisms”) and the ensuing language changes are most visible. That is why T. V. Civičjan as early as 1966 highly appreciated their relevance to the application of areal linguistic analysis to the Balkan linguistic league and the future Balkan Linguistic Atlas (Цивьян 2008: 51–54).

Various scholars such as M. Deanović, P. Ivić, St. Stoykov (among the promoters of the idea of a Balkan Linguistic Atlas) have paid particular attention to isolated Balkan dialects.

It should be regretted that these dialects have not found the place they deserve in the overall make-up of the “Small Balkan Linguistic Atlas” edited by A. N. Sobolev. However, this pioneering project takes a first step in the right direction by dedicating a volume to the isolated Aromanian dialect in Pindos, Greece (cf. BARA/КАНЛ/СОБОЛЕВ 2005).

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