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THE IMPACT OF BROCH'S WORK ON SERBIAN DIALECTOLOGY

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Abstract. The speeches of the Prizren-Timok dialect area represent the most thoroughly studied part of the Serbian linguistic environment. They have been examined by numerous Slavic linguists, as well as by scholars of non-Slavic origin, the first of whom was the Norwegian Slavic linguist Olaf Broch, a professor of Slavic languages from Oslo. His monograph on the dialects of the southernmost parts of Serbia, *Die Dialekte des südlichsten Serbiens*, published in German in Vienna in 1903, paved the way for future intensive and fruitful studies of the southernmost Serbian dialects. On the occasion of the 120th anniversary of its publication, in 2023 the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia in the Kingdom of Norway and the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters held a celebration to honor the renowned Norwegian Slavic scholar Olaf Broch. The guests of honor included T. Milosavljević, a representative of the SASA Institute for the Serbian Language, who delivered a presentation prepared specifically for this jubilee and co-authored with A. Savić-Grujić. This paper represents a more recent and extended version of that presentation. Based on detailed and numerous analyses of Broch's monographs carried out by the most influential Serbian dialectologists, as well as on analyses of Broch's own work on the speeches of the Prizren-Timok dialect area, the authors attempt to reconstruct the scientific and cultural insights that bring these dialects fully into the limelight. Even though later studies of this dialect area have indicated that some of the findings in *Die Dialekte des südlichsten Serbiens* were not always sufficiently precise, Olaf Broch should be honored, as his scientific endeavors—and the data that informed them—mark the beginning of systematic and detailed study of the speeches of the Prizren-Timok dialects, and, at the same time, the beginning of the history of the scientific study of Serbian dialects.

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In addition to his research, Broch dedicated considerable attention to historical, socio-political, and cultural topics, publishing on them in a variety of outlets. Broch's newspaper articles and correspondence are archived in several countries, though most are housed in the National Library of Norway in Oslo. Among other materials, this collection includes Broch's correspondence with prominent Slavic scholars, including Vatroslav Jagić, Aleksandar Belić, and Alexei A. Shakhmatov. Special importance is given to his correspondence with his colleague and close friend Shakhmatov, which includes approximately 300 letters written between 1889 and 1919 (published in Moscow in 2021). For Serbian philology, the most valuable letters are those in which Broch describes his travels through Serbia and reflects on Belić's criticism of his studies on the southern and southeastern Serbian speeches (Лёнгрен, 2021).

Die Dialekte des südlichsten Serbiens

—*Reception of the Study by Serbian Dialectologists*

Multiple detailed analyses of Broch's monograph present relevant scientific and cultural information that sheds light on why this book deserves "recognition and praise"⁴ (Белић, 1905, p. CI). Broch's study of the southernmost Serbian dialects, which established him as a Slavic linguist of global standing, remains relevant to this day, primarily from the perspective of historical linguistics. Belić published his seminal work *Dijalekti istočne i južne Srbije* (Белић, 1905) soon after the publication of Broch's study, and it was he who first wrote about the monograph of the renowned Norwegian Slavic linguist.

Bearing in mind that this systematic work paved the way for further study of Serbian folk speeches, Belić provided a detailed overview of Broch's work and an evaluation of the compiled linguistic material. He first presented his findings in his introduction to the monograph *Dijalekti istočne i južne Srbije* (Белић, 1905), followed by a separate study, *O dijalekatskom materijalu O. Broha* (Белић, 1911). Belić took note of the fact that Broch, as a foreigner, had faced numerous difficulties, primarily when it came to the selection of informants. Considering that his informants were primarily educated individuals, the value of the linguistic material he used is often questionable, as it contains excessive amounts of literary language (Белић, 1911, p. 37). However, Belić concludes that Broch should be awarded "recognition and praise" (Белић, 1905, p. CI), since he "proved himself successful on numerous occasions" (Белић, 1905, p. CV). First and foremost, Broch was an excellent phonetician, as "he could detect even the finest and smallest features of the phonetics of this speech" (Белић, 1905, p. CI). So, it is an undeniable fact that he made accurate notations of texts, but what remains questionable is the extent to which they were delivered to him with accuracy. Taken as a whole,

⁴ All quotes translated by the authors.

Broch “will have lasting credit for having used his knowledge and skills to be the first to describe one part of the dialect of our country” (Белић, 1905, p. CV).

Irrespective of the faults Belić found with Broch’s work on southeastern Serbian speeches, he respected Broch’s professionalism and dedication to scientific research, considering him one of the most prominent Slavic scholars of his time. He personally wrote a proposal for Broch’s induction into the Serbian Royal Academy, based on which Broch was elected a foreign corresponding member of the Academy on February 16, 1920. On that occasion, Broch sent Belić a letter of gratitude:

«Отправив официальное благодарственное письмо Академии, считаю первым долгом благодарить Вас за оказанную мне великую честь, которую, не колеблясь, называю в высокой степени незаслуженной. Догадываюсь, что как раз Вы поставили вопрос о моем избрании, – тем более, что слова д-ра Смодлака дают намек в это направление. Благодарю сердечнейше за честь и благосклонное, симпатичное отношение из страны, пребывание в которой и работу в которой считаю одним из самых дорогих воспоминаний своей жизни – хотя бы и результаты этой работы показались, может быть, не особенно выдающимися, – на что они, впрочем, и не претендовали.» (Ичин, 2016, pp. 269–270)⁴

Following Belić’s work, the speeches of east and south Serbia were thoroughly researched, with these efforts reaching a peak of intensity during the second half of the 20th century. Pavle Ivić, one of the greatest Serbian dialectologists, shares his opinion on Broch’s *Die Dialekte* in his *Dijalektološka proučavanja govora prizrensko-timočke zone* (Ивић, 1994): “The material obtained from the area between Vranje and Pirot was to a great extent exposed to local dialects. The author is an exceptional phonetician, but is less well-versed in our dialectical issues” (Ивић, 1994, p. 57).

Still, even though Broch’s method of compiling relevant material has serious drawbacks, the classification presented in his study is, in principle, correct. Presenting primarily the features of spoken language shared across the entire area, and analyzing each local speech in turn, he opened up the possibility for “providing a relief-like view of the differences among the speeches” (Ивић, 1994, p. 57).

Irrespective of the fact that the publication of Belić’s *Dijalekti istočne i južne Srbije* (Белић, 1905) placed Broch’s findings in a more modest light, Ivić points out that it was the first time Broch had ever come into contact with Serbian

⁴ The correspondence between Belić and Broch, conducted in Russian, spanned more than 30 years. Broch’s first letter is dated January 18, 1917, and his last, November 20, 1955. Thanks to the efforts of Serbian scholars, Broch’s letters to Belić were published in 2016. From the available correspondence, it is clear that Broch and Belić held each other in high esteem and exchanged knowledge in linguistics and philology, allocating considerable importance to current social topics of their time. The letters which Belić sent to Broch are kept in the National Library of Norway in Oslo.

speeches, and that since “there were no precedents or role models in the existing literature on our dialects, we have to admit that he completed a feat worthy of respect” (Ивић, 1994, p. 57).

The significance, achievements, and relevance of Broch's studies have been addressed by distinguished Serbian linguists, honoring the scholar at every opportunity. On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of Broch's birth, in 1958, the eminent Serbian linguistic journal *Naš jezik* published a text by Miloš Moskovljević, titled *Devedesetogodišnjica prof. O. Broka* (Московљевић, 1958), in honor of the great Slavic linguist and friend of the Serbian people. Looking back on his contribution to the development of Slavic studies, dialectology, and phonetics, Moskovljević speaks of Broch's contribution to Serbian linguistics with great respect. Broch faced significant challenges during his field studies: this dialect area had only been liberated from Ottoman rule a decade before his arrival; the linguistic features of those speeches were unknown to him at the time and exhibited a complex phonetic and syntactic structure; and they bordered on West Bulgarian speeches. Despite these obstacles, he was the first to study these speeches scientifically, showing that they were an integral part of the Serbian language. This was particularly important, as at that time Bulgarian scholars were actively promoting the widespread opinion that these dialects belonged to the Bulgarian language.

Moskovljević especially emphasized that Broch's book *Die Dialekte des südlichsten Serbiens* was the first in-depth scientific study of these dialects. According to Moskovljević (1958), we owe Broch gratitude not only for his description of our dialects, but also for the considerable love and friendship he showed toward our people and our country. Having returned from his dialectological travels across Serbia, Broch held lectures and published articles in journals, all conveying great sympathy for this remote country and its people, who were largely unknown in Norway. Almost fifty years after his travels, during a meeting of the Norwegian Linguistics Institute, he spoke with warmth about his experiences and adventures in Serbia, out of respect for a representative of this friendly country who was in attendance. On that occasion, he said that, health permitting, he would publish his recollections. During his trip through Serbia, Broch constantly sent letters to *Aftenposten*, Norway's oldest and most prominent daily newspaper, and upon his return he gave a series of lectures. His interest in the fate of Serbian people never ceased; rather, he continued to closely follow political developments in Serbia and wrote about them.

Three years after the publication of this text, *Aftenposten* published Moskovljević's obituary following Professor Broch's death in 1961. (Московљевић, 1961). In it, Moskovljević expressed great regret at saying goodbye to one of the most prominent Slavic linguists, the founder and greatest representative of Slavic studies in Norway. He described Broch's scientific journey in some detail and once again expressed his gratitude to the Norwegian scholar as the person who had confirmed the identity of southeast Serbian speeches as a component part of the Serbian linguistic unity, thus refuting the claims of Bulgarian scholars.

In memory of Professor Broch, Irena Grickat (Грицкат, 1961) contributed an *In memoriam* to the journal *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor*, honoring the last foreign Slavicist elected a corresponding member of the Serbian Royal Academy. She called him a highly deserving and likeable figure among Slavic linguists from non-Slavic countries. Grickat pointed out the scholarly importance of Broch's work not only in relation to the Serbian language but also in the broader Slavic context. While he was the first to offer scientific evidence that southeast Serbian speeches belong to the Serbian language, he also carried out the first comparative studies of Slavic phonemes, making his work a strong introduction to the study of certain Slavic languages.

Broch produced physiological descriptions of the phonemes of various Slavic speeches and provided an overview of the physiology of Slavic languages in general. Many of his studies deal with sound systems and sound combinations presented in a synchronic framework, including shared characteristics and comparisons of these systems from the perspective of dialectical variation. If there is anything in his presentations that may now be considered historical rather than contemporary scientific knowledge, it is merely a result of the inevitable development of science over time. Broch's scholarly efforts and the data he compiled in the field proved very useful for the Serbian scientific study of language, where his name remains relevant to this day.

In 2003, on the occasion of the centennial of the publication of the monograph *Die Dialekte des südlichsten Serbiens*, the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš hosted a scientific conference titled *Olaf Brok i srpska dijalektologija*. The conference was attended by Norwegian scholars Erik Egeberg and Svein Mønnesland, Serbian dialectologists Slobodan Remetić, Nedeljko Bogdanović, and Jordana Marković—professors at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš—as well as Saša Dimitrijević, a journalist from Niš who was a Norway-based correspondent at the time. The papers presented at this conference were published six years later, in 2009, by the SASA Center for Scientific Research and the University of Niš. The aim of the conference was to honor Olaf Broch and shed light on his contribution to Serbian dialectology in its earliest days.

In his paper simply titled *Olaf Brok*, Egeberg (Егебер, 2009) provides an abundance of interesting data from the biography of this eminent Slavic linguist, with a particular focus on his study of Slavic speeches. After a lyrical introduction, in which he describes Broch's portrait hanging on the wall of the dining room of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, Egeberg writes about Broch's scientific beginnings and the numerous tasks that, at the time, the leading Slavic linguists and authority figures entrusted to him (Егебер, 2009, p. 87). On the same page, Egeberg says that Broch's trip to Russia in 1887 marked "the beginning of Broch's life-long interest in Slavic languages," while his association with Vatroslav Jagić, one of the most prominent Slavic scholars working in Vienna, and the Austrian Academy of Sciences and its Balkans Committee, permanently

defined him as a Slavic linguist. Namely, the Balkans Committee honored him by dispatching him to Serbia to study the local dialects.

Considering that Broch's attention was mainly focused on areas where languages meet, he chose to begin his study of Serbian dialects in the speech area which extends along the valley of the Morava river, to the south and east of Niš, toward the Bulgarian border. Broch largely owed his success to his exceptionally sensitive ear, "which operated on par with the technical devices of the time" (Еребеpr, 2009, p. 92). Egeberg points out that, in addition to "the vowels, consonants, and melodic aspects of language," Broch was particularly interested in the life and customs of all segments of society, which he reported on in detail in his letters and newspaper articles. These vivid texts offer remarkable depictions of life, culture, and society, and provide the reader with a broader cultural and historical context, also offering insight into Broch's findings, thoughts, and fears. Broch had an unusually broad array of interests, which explains why his studies continue to bear relevance for Slavic studies, both general linguistic and cultural studies.

In his paper titled *Olaf Brok—dijalektolog*, Mønnesland (Менесланд, 2009) presents Broch's dialectological work on Slavic folk speeches. Speaking of Broch's contributions regarding the region of southeast Serbia, Mønnesland highlights as particularly significant the fact that, even though the area was part of the borderlands, Broch "avoided any politicizing, sticking to pure descriptions" (Менесланд, 2009, p. 105).

Bogdanović presented a paper titled *Olaf Brok i srpska dijalektologija* (Богдановић, 2009), in which he reflects on Belić's and Ivić's evaluations of Broch. Bogdanović highlights the fact that Broch's scholarly contribution was met with approval by the Serbian scientific community at the beginning of the 20th century, confirming that the Norwegian linguist is rightly credited for laying the foundation for work in this area, even though he "studied language that was not his mother tongue, and thus sometimes gave the impression of being imprecise, of providing insufficient corroboration, certainly of being incorrectly informed, and not allowing the possibility of repeating his studies in the field for reassessment" (Богдановић, 2009, p. 111).

Considering that Broch's and Belić's monographs were published practically simultaneously, they were naturally compared, and it often seemed that Belić's work surpassed Broch's. However, even though Belić's study contains more dialectological material and the author is more precise in defining the borders of the area where this dialect was used, "Broch's findings stand firm where observing phenomena required high personal ability" (Богдановић, 2009, p. 115). This leads Bogdanović to conclude: "Written at the same time and referring to the same area to the greatest extent, while independent of one another, these studies became complementary after publication" (Богдановић, 2009, p. 115).

Marković's paper, titled *Sto godina proučavanja govora istočne i južne Srbije* (Марковић, 2009), discusses Broch's monograph in the context of the most significant dialectological studies focusing on the folk speeches used in southeast

Serbia. In addition, in 2015 Marković wrote a paper titled *Olaf Brok u svetlu srpske dijalektologije*, aiming to incorporate existing observations of Serbian scientists regarding Olaf Broch's role and importance in Serbian dialectology. Referring to Broch as the first foreign linguist to study the Prizren-Timok speeches, she highlights in particular his interest in language interference and contact linguistics, a discipline that developed much later. According to Marković, what makes Broch's work important is the fact that "at the time when he was interested in Serbian speeches used in this area, there were no descriptions of specific dialectological areas, which makes his monograph the first of its kind" (Марковић, 2015, p. 106). Unfortunately, since the book was written in German and published in Vienna, it was virtually unavailable to Serbs; the author therefore strongly advocates for the publication of a Serbian translation of the book, which would make it readily accessible to wider audiences and the scientific community.

Summing up the observations of Serbian dialectologists, Marković concludes that the Serbian scientific community regards positively Olaf Broch and that he occupies a prominent position in Serbian dialectology as "a forerunner of Serbian scientific study of natural speeches" (Марковић, 2015, p. 103). The fact that Broch was elected a corresponding member of the Serbian Royal Academy in 1920 and was a corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences (Department of Language and Literature) from 1948 to 1960 confirms that Serbia's scientific community recognized and duly acknowledged the work of the Norwegian linguist and the contribution he made to the Serbian people.

Shortly after the publication of the Niš conference papers, Radmila Žugić published a paper titled *Brok kao istraživač govora najjužnije Srbije* (Жугић, 2016), originally presented in 2014 to mark the 110th anniversary of the publication of *Die Dialekte des südlichsten Serbiens*. The author asserts that the name and work of Olaf Broch are unavoidable when writing about the history of Serbian dialectology, emphasizing the importance of Broch's legacy owing to his meticulous and systematic study of the speeches of south Serbia.

No study on south and southeast Serbian speeches published subsequently fails to reference Broch's scholarly merit and contributions. One of the most detailed descriptions of Broch's book is found in the introduction to the monograph *Granice prizrensko-timočkih govora u vlasotinačkom kraju* written by Stanislav Stanković (Станковић, 2008). Among other things, Stanković points out that the "speeches of the Vlasotince area were (in part) the subject of serious dialectological explorations at the very beginning of organized efforts to study Serbian dialects", with Broch (1903) and Belić (1905 and 1911) as the "first and true contributors of the knowledge of the dialectics actually spoken in and around Vlasotince" (Станковић, 2008, pp. 24–25). Stanković continues by claiming that for as long as "nine decades, their studies remained the sole source of data on the language of this part of Serbia" (2008, p. 25). Taking note of the previously mentioned features of Broch's work, and in accordance with the lingua-geographical approach

he adopted in his study, Stanković offers a summary lingua-geographical map presenting Broch's "field findings and results" in classifying and defining the borders of the dialect in the Vlasotince area.

On the 110th anniversary of the publication of *Die Dialekte*, a ceremony titled *Srbi u Norveškoj 1899* was held at the University of Niš, dedicated to cultural and historical events that took place at the turn of the century, when Olaf Broch was in Serbia and sent reports to the Norwegian press. The topics presented at the ceremony included King Aleksandar's reception of Broch; the time Broch spent in the royal summer house in Niš; his stays in villages in east and south Serbia, where he collected language samples and socialized with peasants; his views on this part of Serbia immediately after its liberation from Ottoman rule; the mentality of the local people; his linguistic competences; and the results of his linguistic work in the region. Presenting at the ceremony were professors of dialectology from the University of Niš, including Nedeljko Bogdanović, Jordana Marković, and Tatjana Trajković, as well as local journalists, authors, historians, and Nils Ragnar Kamsvag, the Norwegian ambassador.

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters in Oslo organized a celebration to honor the 120th anniversary of the publication of *Die Dialekte*. Broch's book was spoken of with particular reference by Dr. Gunn Birkelund, Secretary General of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters; Dr. Tanja Milosavljević, senior research associate at the SASA Institute for the Serbian Language; Dr. Tatjana Trajković, professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš; and the ambassadors of Serbia and Austria to Norway. The celebration was also attended by Dr. Ingvald Broch, a cousin of Olaf Broch, linguist and professor, as a special guest of honor.

Conclusion

While the scientific field of linguistics continues to develop and yield new results, somewhat overshadowing Broch's early contributions, his monograph nonetheless remains the first scholarly attempt at a systematic description of the folk speeches of southeast Serbia and the foundation upon which Serbian scholars built rural dialectology. It is an undeniable fact that the study *Die Dialekte des südlichsten Serbiens* marks the beginning of the systemic and meticulous examination of the Prizren-Timok speech dialects—that is, the beginning of the history of the scientific study of Serbian dialects.

Sadly, 120 years later, this significant monograph has not yet been translated into Serbian, which remains a task for Serbian scholars. Although many of Broch's findings are today more a matter of the history of science than current academic research, the translation and publication of his study would be of major benefit to science in general, especially from historical-linguistic and lingua-cultural perspectives.

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Утицај Броковог рада на српску дијалектологију

Резиме

Говори призренско-тимочке дијалекатске области представљају најпотпуније проучен део српског језичког простора. Ове говоре проучавали су многи како домаћи тако и инострани слависти, али је први међу њима био норвешки слависта и фонетичар Олаф Брок, професор словенских језика у Ослу. Олаф Брок је током службених обилазака словенских земаља стекао изванредно знање словенских језика и друштвених прилика на тим подручјима. Будући да су у фокусу његове пажње пре свега били гранични говори, године 1901. Комисија за Балкан Аустријске академије наука поверила му је задатак да у Србији изучава најјужније српске дијалекте, који су по језичким особинама специфични и различити од осталих српских говора, те потврди њихову припадност српском језику. У овом тексту је на основу доступних записа и излагања српских дијалектолога о Олафу Броку и резултатима његовог рада на пољу проучавања најјужнијих српских дијалеката реконструисана рецепција славног норвешког лингвисте у српској дијалектологији. Рад представља омаж аутору поводом 120 година од објављивања монографије *Die Dialekte des südlichsten Serbiens*, која означава почетак систематског и темељног изучавања говора призренско-тимочког дијалекта, односно почетак историје науке о српским дијалектима. Ова монографија, објављена на немачком језику у Бечу 1903. године, утрла је пут будућим интензивним и плодоносним истраживањима српских дијалеката. О месту, достигнућима и важности Брокових истраживања на пољу проучавања најјужнијих српских дијалеката, различитим поводима, говорили су еминентни домаћи и страни језички стручњаци, одајући му „признање и достојну хвалу” (Белић, 1905, стр. CI). Без обзира на то што је монографија *Die Dialekte des südlichsten Serbiens* у знатној мери постала неактуелна после појаве Белићевих *Дијалеката источне и јужне Србије* (1905), чињеница је да је Брок „учинио подвиг достојан поштовања” (Ивић, 1994, стр. 57). Нажалост, ни после 120 година ова значајна монографија није преведена на српски језик, што представља један од задатака српске научне јавности.

Кључне речи: Олаф Брок; призренско-тимочка дијалекатска област; *Die Dialekte des südlichsten Serbiens*; српски дијалектолози.



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