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THE DIALECT OF CRNA TRAVA AND VLASINA **Vilotije Vukadinović**

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The monograph "*Dialect of Crna Trava and Vlasina*"¹ by Vilotije Vukadinović, Ph.D., the assistant professor of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, was published within the series "Serbian Dialectology Collection"², the oldest and most famous publication of South Slav vernaculars (edition started in 1905, with Belić's "Dialects of East and South Serbia"), edited by the Institute for Serbian Language of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, under the editorship of academician Pavle Ivić.

The monograph offers a description of the grammatical systems of two dialect types (one has the characteristics of Timok-Lužnica dialect, and the other is of the Svrlijig-Zaplanje type), used by the inhabitants of the most distant eastern parts of Serbia along the state border with Bulgaria and in the direct contact with the Bulgarian language.

Crna Trava and Vlasina belong to the passive areas vacated to such an extent that (God forbid!) this study may soon turn into a significant document and only a confirmation of their existence and their unique speech, giving information both about what they had known and believed in, and how they had named the contents of their conscience and practice.

Prepared in the manner usual for the science of dialectology, the book of V. Vukadinović contains the language material taken down in the field, collected from now more and more scarce inhabitants of all the villages and hamlets in the mentioned areas, and systematized according to the traditional grammatical layers (sounds and accents, forms, syntax). The recordings of narration are also added as interesting and credible confirmations of described idioms. The phenomena showing geographical distribution are presented by maps.

As known from the previous works of Belić, these dialects contain a lot of archaisms and specific innovations, which separate them to a certain extent from the average štokavian status. Namely, the characteristics developed until the 12th-13th century are

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¹ In original: "Govor Crne Trave i Vlasine", SDZB XLII, Belgrade, 1996

² In original: "Srpski dijalektološki zbornik"

štokavian (one semivowel, the sound *i* instead of *jeri*, the sounds *e* and *u* in the place of nasals: *zet*, *zub*, then *e* instead of *jat*, *-ga* in the genitive of pronominal-adjective words, etc.), but later characteristics of the Balkan type strayed them from štokavian (disappearance of the case inflection, analytical comparison, disappearance of infinitives, expiratory accent...). Some other characteristics, specific for these areas, have also been developed: *č*, *dž* in the places where the štokavian would have *ć*, *đ* (*sveča*, *medža*), *ć*, *đ* instead of *k*, *g* in certain positions (*ruće*, *nođe*, *devojća*), the appearance of articles (*čovekav*, *ženava*, *detevo*) - all in the region of Vlasina, and the preservation of the final *l* (*bil*, *imal*) and some other characteristics identical in both areas. All of these are described in this study very precisely and in details, so that one part of our linguistic and ethnic territory has become much closer and clearer to the science. Yet, it is followed by a depressive comprehension that the number of the idiom speakers is ever decreasing, and that the fortunate idea of describing this dialect has occurred in the very last moment of its existence.

Having long been the homeland of migrant workers, Crna Trava and Vlasina had not remained uninfluenced by the standard language that was entering the areas through various channels, bringing certain characteristics that violate the system of their dialect, particularly with younger generations, and bring it closer to the standard. The changes are more likely to appear in such characteristics that make the clearest distinction between an individual speaking the local dialect and anyone else coming from another part of the country. For this reason, you can more and more frequently hear: *devojka*, *ruke*, *došo*, *našo*, *oće*, *veda*, etc. However, any better-informed person could easily perceive the difference between an authentic linguistic trait and an intrusion from somewhere else or an innovation derived from the standard language. Yet, it is certain that the local characteristics shall disappear neither easily nor rapidly if there will be people to be born and brought up in the region... Let it be so, hopefully.

The Dialect of Crna Trava and Vlasina by V. Vukadinovi} represents a valuable contribution to the science and a significant evidence that Serbian people and language have lasted for centuries in these regions. The conditions of modern life have brought many alterations to the areas, but they survived in spite of all the challenges and finally fell into the focus of linguistic research. They had deserved it long before by the particularities of the speech, though. The book may also prove useful for the educational practice, where the apprehension of the language standards is but rarely conducted by leaning on the mother tongue, on already known - not intended to forget the local, but to create a relationship between the local and the standard, which would combine and preserve both idioms. This would enrich the speaker and make him more self-confident in communication with other people, keeping contact with his homeland history and obeying the requests of modern times simultaneously.