

The Bulgarian dialect names of the cat*

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Abstract. This article is a result of a series of studies related to a forthcoming lingo-geographical presentation of the topic in the European Linguistic Atlas. It discusses the types of dialect names of the domestic cat (*Felis domestica*) that are used within the Bulgarian language territory, as well as the semantic basis of the process. The article traces the etymology of the words, analysing their formal paradigms. In addition, it draws parallels between the names of the cat and other real-life entities - objects, plants, etc.

Keywords: dialectology, linguistic geography, dialect lexicology

The issue concerning how the domestic cat has been named in different languages is investigated in a number of linguistic and lingo-geographical studies of Bulgarian and foreign scientists (BDA 2001; BDA 1975; BDA 1981; OLA 2000; OLA 2013; Antonova-Vasileva 2017; Budziszewska 1984; Odran 1970; Panayotov 2001; Trubachev 1960 among others). The interest in this issue is due to the fact that it concerns an extremely archaic basic vocabulary that is part of the main lexical stock of each one of the European languages and the realia referred to by this vocabulary has been known since ancient times, because cats and humans have been living together for millennia. While mapping the phenomenon in question for the territory of Europe, the Bulgarian Commission at the European Linguistic Atlas has identified the need for some clarifications and additions. It is precisely because of this need that the present article raises the issue again. For example, the maps published in *Slavic Linguistic Atlas (Ob-shtoslavjanskij lingvisticheski atlas - OLA)* and devoted to the names of the female and the male cat outline a number of interesting trends and interlanguage parallels but since the Bulgarian Commission was not part of the *Atlas* at that time,

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these maps do not contain Bulgarian dialect material (OLA 2000, 45, 57). Due to the specifics of this type of lingo-geographical studies, a number of linguistic details have not been included in the generalizing volume of the *Atlas of Bulgarian Dialects* (*Balgarski dialekten atlas* - BDA). As to the regional volumes of the *Atlas*, the phenomenon under discussion is mapped only in those devoted to Western Bulgaria. In addition, the Bulgarian language territory is mapped in *Atlas Linguarum Europae* (ALE) and OLA only in terms of a few dozen points, whereas in BDA, they are several thousand. The relevant linguistic studies are primarily focused on the dichotomy between *komka* and *мачка*. Consequently, some interesting dialectal lexemes that are less common remain somehow in the background. For this reason, the article aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the variety of Bulgarian dialectal lexemes denoting 'cat'.

The animal species that Bulgarians raise in their homes or farmyards have a separate name for the male and the female animal as well as for the little one. This can easily be explained by the differentiation of the animals' functions according to their sex and age, which is of great economic importance. In the Bulgarian language, both the name of the male specimen (*кон* [male horse], *куче* [male dog], etc.) and that of the female one (*крава* [cow], *свиня* [female pig], etc.) can be accepted as a species name, with no detectable regularity in the choice. An interesting fact about the way the domestic cat (*Felis silvestris catus*) has been named is that in this case, the name of the male animal *ком* (from Proto-Slavic **katъ*, borrowed from Latin *cattus*) is older. Trubachev believes that it initially served as the common generic name of the animal - male or female, as evidenced by the Polish language, for example, where the lexeme *kot* is the name given to the animal species discussed here. The author points out that in the course of time, when the cat became a pet in the full sense of the word, the masculine gender of the naming word was no longer appropriate and in the Slavic languages, the female animal began to be referred to by the derivative form **kotja*, **kotjъka*, **kotъka* (Trubachev 1960, 95). The latter is characteristic of Bulgarian, where the word under discussion is derived from *ком* by means of the auxiliary suffix *-ъka*. The female cat's name *komka* is also found in Russian dialect word *кѡмка* 'male cat; female cat', Russian Church-Slavonic *котъка*, Ukrainian *kimka*, Polish *kotka* 'the female of *Felis silvestris catus*' (BER 1979, 676). The meaning of precisely this name was subsequently extended to refer to the species *Felis silvestris catus*. Trubachev also pays attention to the existing differences between the ancient names of the wild and the domestic cat in the Slavic languages. He considers these differences as a proof that the domestic cat was not domesticated on the spot. In his view, the wild cat was known to the Slavs because of its wide distribution over the territory they inhabited and that is why, it has its own old name in the Slavic languages, whereas the domestic cat, along with its name - a Latin loanword, was introduced much later as an attribute of civilization and even luxury (Trubachev 1960, 92). Trubachev also indicates that the time when the word *котъ* was borrowed should not be related to the all-Slavic period, since the inter-Slavic language borders could not have influenced cultural borrowing (Trubachev 1960, 96). Panayotov opposes this statement, specifying that the process was completed within the common Proto-Slavic period, i.e., before the differentiation of the separate Slavic languages (Panayotov 2001, 97). The author, however, does not provide concrete arguments in

support of his claim and the examples, whose description immediately follows it, are related to the word *мачка*. Given the relative brevity of the word in question, consisting of two syllables in which a consonant and a vowel alternate, with the first vowel being stressed and hence in strong position, which does not suggest much variability, Trubachev's opinion seems more plausible. According to the author, due to its higher frequency of use the new name gradually replaces the old name of the wild cat and to avoid ambiguity, the forest animal begins to be referred to by a phrase or a compound word, containing an element meaning 'wild', 'forest' - for example Russian *гукая коука*; German *Wildkatze* (Trubachev 1960, 92). In the Bulgarian language, this process continues as the meaning of the lexeme *komka* (only in the plural) is extended to refer to the whole family Felidae, which encompasses mammals belonging to the order of predators with a muscular flexible body, round head, sturdy and relatively short legs with strong claws, which retract when treading (RBE 1995, 100-102).

The archaic nature of the name in question is one of the main reasons for its dialectal variability in Bulgarian to be extremely limited. It is also one of the main reasons for the Bulgarian language territory to be divided, depending on the way the domestic cat is named, into two parts with a boundary approximately coinciding with the yat isogloss area (see Fig. 1). The name *komka*, also typical of the literary language, occurs east of the line Oryahovo - Mezdra - Botevgrad - Panagyurishte - Pazardzhik - Blagoevgrad - Razlog - Gotse Delchev - Valovishta - Serres - Zilyahovo. This name is characteristic of the Eastern dialects as well as of some adjacent Western dialects (cf.: *kòmka* - Moesian, part of the Balkan and sub-Balkan, Strandzha, Thracian, Western Rup and Rhodope dialects; *kýmka* - General Nikolaevo, Sekirovo, Plovdiv region; *kòk'a* - Gela, Stoykite, Shiroka laka, Devin region; *kòmkrъ* - central Balkan dialects, etc. - BDA 2001, 434; BDA 1975, map No. 266; BDA 1981, map No. 329). West of this isogloss, the domestic cat is designated by the name *мачка*, which is also characteristic of Serbo-Croatian *мачка* 'cat and willow catkin', Slovenian *mačka*, Ukrainian *мачка*, Czech dialect word *maček*, *mačka*, Slovak *mačka*, borrowed in Albanian *matš*, *matše*, in Turkish *maçka*, *maçi* and in Hungarian *macska* (BER 1986, 696-697). The origin of this name has not been sufficiently clarified. According to Miklosich and Berneker, it is a hypocoristic form of the proper name *Мария*, Lessiak unconvincingly tries to derive it from МАТИ (BER 1986, 696-697), St. Mladenov deems it an instance of onomatopoeia and rejects the hypothesis that it originates from the proper name *Мария* as implausible, since he considers it to be a later phenomenon (Mladenov 1941, 292). Examining the vocabulary used in different European languages to convey the cat's cry as well as the ways of enticing this animal, Trubachev concludes that these are onomatopoeic lexemes, which, however, do not have a common origin but given the similarities they share, hardly have they developed completely independently in each language (Trubachev 1960, 98-99). Luchia Antonova-Vasileva proposes that due to the onomatopoeic nature of the name there may be a connection between the name of the little dog and that of the little cat (Antonova-Vasileva 2017, 227). Within the Bulgarian language territory, the name *мачка* is found mainly in Western dialects (for example, *мачка* - in the true and peripheral North-Western and South-Western dialects; *мачк'а* - Razhdavets, Breznik region; *мача* / *маче* - Deli Hasan mahala and Staroshevo, Valovishta re-

gion; *мàча* // *мàчка* - Butkovo and Dzhuma mahala, Valovishta region; *мàчка* // *мàча* / *мàче* - Dolna Kamila, Homondos, Kalendra, Serres region; *мàча* // *мàче* - Elshen and Kumlia, Serres region; *За мàчката се вèли - се òмачи* [It is said that the cat litters]. Prespa; *Мàчка снìе* [The cat sleeps]. Shishevets, Gora; there is also a variant *мàука*, which is an addition to the data from BDA: *Ка снìе мaуқàтa* [The cat will sleep]; *Мaуқàтa зрìмбu* [The cat purrs]. Borye, Gora - Antonova-Vasileva 2016, 125; BDA 2001, 434; BDA 1975, map No. 266; BDA 1981, map No. 329; Bozhkov 1986, map No. 3326; Ivanov 1972, map No. 178). The same linguistic dichotomy regarding the names of the domestic cat is also observed in the Slovak language but in terms of their geographical distribution, the word *mačka* is used in Central and a large part of Eastern Slovakia, whereas *kočka* is used in Western Slovakia (Panayotov 2001, 96).

The name *kome*, respectively *маче*, which is used in Bulgarian to refer to the young ones of the species discussed here or as a diminutive, also occurs as a name of the species *Felis silvestris catus* in a small number of settlements within the Bulgarian language territory (RBE 1995, 97). Like *komka*, the word *kome* is derived from the native lexeme *kom* (BER 1979, 670), whereas *маче* originates from *мàча* and in this case, there is probably onomatopoeia involved (BER 1986, 695). In addition, the name *kome* logically occurs within the area of distribution of the name *komka*, while *маче* is within the area of distribution of the word *мàчка*, respectively (for example: *kòm'e* - Sivino, Arda, Borikovo, Mogilitza, Bukovo, Turyan, Chokmanovo, Momarsko, Vievo, Pisanitsa, Hasovitsa, Smolyan region; Batantsi, Borinovo, Petrov dol, Sharenka, Leshtak, Borovina, Madan region; Oryahovets, Petkovo, Malka Arda, Ardino region; Mugla, Nastan, Beden, Breze, Osikovo, Petvar, Selcha, Devin region; Dryanovo, Krushovo, Dzhurkovo, Yavorovo, Leskovo, Cherven, Narechen, Cheshnegirovo, Katunitsa, Mominsko selo, Asenovgrad region; Belashtitsa, Plovdiv region; North Drama; southeast of Gotse Delchev; *kòm'ę* - Central Rhodope dialects; Dryanovo, Lakavitsa, Dzhurkovo, Asenovgrad region; *kòk'o* - Kostandovo, Velingrad region; Levochevo, Smolyan region; *мàче* - Barakli, Valovishta region - BDA 2001, 434; BDA 1975, map No. 266; BDA 1981, map No. 329; Bozhkov 1986, map No. 3326; Ivanov 1972, map No. 178). The team that has created the map of the domestic cat's names in the BDA generalizing volume, has not included these lexico-semantic variants, since they constitute very small or fragmented areas, but has explicitly mentioned them in the corresponding commentary (BDA 2001, 434).

Unlike the name *komka*, whose meaning, as mentioned above, has been extended to refer to the whole species *Felis silvestris catus* and when used in the plural - to the whole family Felidae, the old native word *kom* and its masculine derivatives are used, from a synchronic point of view, to denote only the male specimens of the discussed species in Bulgarian. Furthermore, a greater variety and variability of the names are observed here at the dialectal level.

In keeping with the principle of the BDA generalizing volumes to provide maximally generalized information, the map of the male cat's names published there divides the Bulgarian language territory into three parts (see Fig. 2). The largest of them comprises all Eastern dialects (except for Pirdop, Devin and Gotse Delchev regions) as well as the adjacent Western dialects east of the line Oryahovo - Mezdra - Botevgrad - Panagyurishte - Pazardzhik - Blagoevgrad - Razlog -

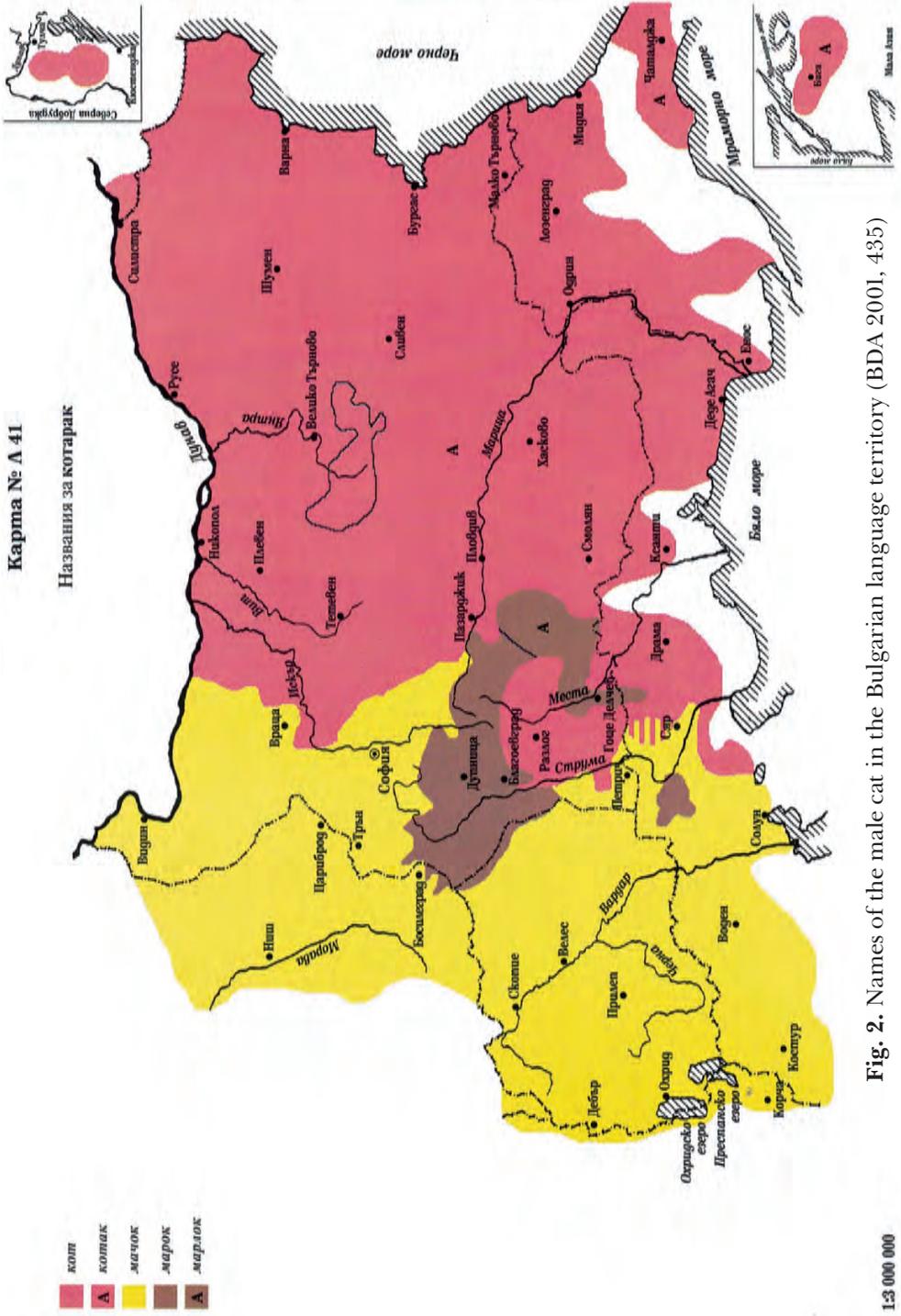


Fig. 2. Names of the male cat in the Bulgarian language territory (BDA 2001, 435)

Gotse Delchev - Valovishta - Serres - Zilyahovo, where the name that is used to refer to the animal in question is *komak*. In this huge area, only the dialects in Sevelievo, Dryanovo, Gabrovo, Teteven, and Elena regions have been differentiated by an additional isogloss and the name mapped there is the archaic *kom* (BDA 2001, 435). The rest of the Western Bulgarian dialects, including the region of Pirdop described as transitional between the Balkan and the true South-Western dialects (KDDBE 2014), are characterized by the use of the name *мачок*, and in Kyustendil, Samokov, Dupnitsa and Blagoevgrad regions, the name is *маpok*, whereas its derivative *мапюк* occurs in Devin and Gotse Delchev regions (BDA 2001, 435). Such a generalized account certainly has its merits in studying the main trends in the development of the linguistic (in this case lexical) paradigm and without a doubt this is precisely the purpose of the BDA generalizing volumes. To any Bulgarian language user, however, it becomes clear that achieving this purpose is at the expense of omitting a number of interesting details. For instance, it is immediately obvious that the distribution of the word *комапак* - one of the most common names denoting 'male cat', also used extensively in normative language - is not mapped. In this respect, far more significant and interesting are the regional linguo-geographical studies of the Bulgarian language territory, as they explicitly show the whole richness and diversity of dialectal word-formation.

Although maps on this issue have been published only in the volumes devoted to North-Western and South-Western Bulgaria, where the differences are lexical, and in the other regional volumes of BDA, this phenomenon is not mapped, since these regions of the country are characterized only by phonetic and word-formation features, not by lexical ones, the availability in the east of some of the lexical phenomena mapped in the western part of the country has been confirmed by a number of other dialect sources (Arh. BDR). This makes it possible to present a more comprehensive picture of the names denoting 'male cat' within the Bulgarian language territory.

The archaic native lexeme *kom* (from Proto-Slavic **katъ*) is the base of the literary and many of the dialect names of the representatives of *Felis silvestris catus* in the Bulgarian language (cf. *komka*, *komak*, *комаче*, *комапак*, *комапаче*, *kome*, *комечуе* and many others). Although the origin of this Proto-Slavic word from Latin *cattus* is not clarified, there are zoo-geographical and cultural-historical considerations pointing to African origin and attempts to compare it with Nubian *kad̄s* (BER 1979, 670). Regardless of the fact that in vernacular Latin, the word initially denoted simply a wild animal, according to Trubachev, it was borrowed in the Slavic and Baltic languages with its secondary meaning 'domestic cat'. The author proposes that this did not necessarily happen during the all-Slavic period but it certainly happened at a relatively early stage of the development of the Slavic languages, around the second half of the 1st century AD, and emphasizes that the Slavic **kotъ* is an obligatory element in the vocabulary of the North-Slavic languages, whereas its presence or absence divides the South-Slavic languages into two groups - Eastern (Bulgarian - the author describes the Bulgarian *мачка* as peripheral to the West-Slavic name) and Western (Slovenian, Serbian and Croatian), and this dividing line is valid for the distribution of a number of other words (Trubachev 1960, 96-97). In addition to Bulgarian, this name of the male cat is also characteristic of Serbo-Croatian Church-Slavonic

кот, Russian *kom*, Ukrainian *kim*, Belarusian *kom*, Czech dialect word *kot*, Slovak dialect word *kot*, Polish *kot*, Lower Sorbian *kot*, and from Bulgarian it was borrowed in Turkish *kotak*, *kotlak*, *kotik*, also Romanian *cotos* and Albanian *kotel* 'little cat', *kotelë* 'female cat' (diminutive) (BER 1979, 669-670).

The Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language describes *kom* denoting 'male cat' as an obsolete word (RBE 1995, 95). It is used extremely rarely not only in the literary language (mainly by the early authors) but also in Bulgarian dialects (for example, *kom* - Central Balkan dialects; Shumen region; Babek, Velingrad region - Arh. BDR; BDA 2001, 435). This lexeme, however, is highly productive in Bulgarian in terms of word-formation, since most of the later names of the realia in question are derived from it, most of them by means of suffixes.

One of the most common derivative names of *Felis silvestris catus* is *komak* 'male cat', derived from *kom* (BER 1979, 671) with the suffix *-ak*. It is characteristic both of the literary language and of many Eastern Bulgarian dialects as well as of some adjacent Western Bulgarian dialects located east of the line Oryahovo - Mezdra - Botevgrad - Panagyurishte - Pazardzhik - Blagoevgrad - Razlog - Gotse Delchev - Valovishta - Serres - Zilyahovo (for example, *komàk* - Oryahovo, Nikopol, Byala Slatina, Pleven, Cherven bryag, Mezdra, Lukovit, Lovech, Botevgrad, Etropole, Sevlievo, Dryanovo, Gabrovo, Tryavna, Elena regions; north of Teteven; Primorsko, Burgas region; *мауòк* (more typical) / *комàк* (more recent) - Lipnitsa, Oryahovo region; *кымàк* - Ohoden, Mramoren and Gorno Peshtene, Vratsa region; Brashlyanitsa, Bozhuritsa, Dolna Mitropolia, Pleven region; Zhernov, Nikopol region; Dolna Studena, Belene region; Veliko Tarnovo region; Ribaritsa, Etropole region; Zmeevo, Stara Zagora region; Banat - Arh. BDR; BDA 2001, 435; BDA 1981, map No. 330).

Another literary name of the male cat with a wide distribution in Bulgarian dialects is *komapak*. It is also derived from *kom* (BER 1979, 669) by means of the suffixes *-ap-* and *-ak*. This name is again found mainly in Eastern dialects, but it also occurs in some true South-Western dialects (for example, *komapàk* - Troyan and Pavlikeni regions; *komopàk* - Koprivshitsa, West Karlovo, Teteven regions; *komopòk* - Batovo, Dobrich region; Asenovgrad region; Zhelen, Svoge region; Bansko; Demir Hisar region; Karnalovo, Petrich region; Petrovo, Sandanski region; Vlahi, Kresna region; *komapòk* - Patalenitsa and Debrashtitsa, Pazardzhik region; Banichar, Ognyanovo, Oreshe and Dolno Dryanovo, Gotse Delchev region; *komapòk* - north of Stamboliyski; *komepàk* - Sitovo and Lilkovo, Plovdiv region; *комурòк* - Belitsa, Blagoevgrad region; Dolno Ryahovo, Silistra region; *кытурòк* - Bov, Lakatnik, Svoge region; Brestnitsa, Teteven region; Ugarchin, Sopot and Golets, Lovech region; *котèл* / *komapàk* - Smolyan region; *котлиште* / *komapàk* - Shiroka laka, Devin region, etc. - Arh. BDR; BDA 1975, map No. 267; BDA 1981, map No. 330). In addition, at the dialectal level there also occur some morphological variants of the name, which are not found in the literary Bulgarian language (cf. *котърлòк* / *komapàk* - Koynare, Byala Slatina region; *комурлòк* - Brusen, Teteven region, etc. - Arh. BDR; BDA 1975, map No. 267; BDA 1981, map No. 330), as well as the name *котаран* used in children's literature (cf. *котаран* - Zlatari, Gabrovo region; Slatina, Lovech region, etc. also occurring as *котаран'ан* in separate settlements in the region in question - Arh. BDR).

Other names of the male cat that have a more limited area of distribution are also derived from *kom*, but they display an entirely dialectal word-formation

pattern (for example, *komèl* - Smilyan, Smolyan region; Elhovets, Rudozem region; Srednogortsì, Startsevo, Madan region; *komèl / komapàk* - Smolyan region; *komliuume / komapàk* - Широка лача, Devin region; *komliuume / kymèl* - Varbovo, Devin region; *kòmyp* - Teteven region; Lesidren, Teteven region; Saevo, Troyan region; Kotel region; *kòmop* - Vardun, Targovishte region; *komòp* - Sliven region; *komlàk* - Manastir, Gyumyurdzhina region; *komýnek* - Polaten, Teteven region; and others - Arh. BDR; BDA 1975, map No. 267; BDA 1981, map No. 330). The names *kom'òvâl*, *komomàk*, *komombàc* are found in separate settlements in South-Eastern Bulgaria and the male cat's name *kòme / мѝуко kòme* registered in Gotse Delchev region (BDA 1975, map No. 267) corresponds to what was mentioned above in relation to the lexeme *komka* and proves once again that at the dialectal level this word has a broader meaning and may denote (either alone or in combination with a modifier meaning 'male') the male of the species of cats.

The names of the male cat that are derived from *мѝука* also function entirely at the dialectal level (BER 1986, 698). They are characteristic mainly of the Western dialects and from the Eastern ones they occur, as already noted, only in Pirdop region. The names formed with the suffix *-ok* have a wider area of distribution (for example, *мачòk* - Svoге, Sofia, Montana, Vratsa, Berkovitsa, Pernik, Radomir, Elin Pelin, Samokov, Dupnitsa, Ihtiman regions; Doganitsa, Dolno Tlamino, Barie, Dolna Lyubata, Milevtsi, Bosilegrad region; *мѝуак* - Harsovo, Sandanski region; *мачòk* - Vidin, Kula, Lom, Belogradchik, Tran, Breznik, Slivnitsa regions; *мачòk / мачòk* - Mitrovtsi, Montana region; *мачòk* (more typical) / *komàk* (more recent) - Lipnitsa, Oryahovo region; *мачòk* - Replyana, Belogradchik region; and a derivational variant: *мачаpòk* - Churek, Golyama Rakovitsa, Negushevo, Elin Pelin region; Suevtsi, Belitsa, Shugleovtsi, Gorno Varshilo, Ihtiman region; Osenovo, Blagoevgrad region; Petrich region; west of Sandanski; Smolyanovtsi, Montana region; *мачоpòk* - Samokov, Ohrid, Gevgelija regions; *мѝуоpòk* - Prilep region; Resen region; Steblevo, Prespa region, etc. - Arh. BDR; Antonova-Vasileva 2016, 125; BDA 1975, map No. 267; BDA 1981, map No. 330). The analysed name is also found in Serbo-Croatian *мѝуак* and from Bulgarian, it was borrowed in Albanian *мачòk* and Aromanian *matšòku* (BER 1986, 698). The names of the male cat formed with the suffix *-op* are mainly distributed in the South-Western dialects (for example, *мачòp* - Tserovo, Sofia region; Samokov region; Prilep region; Kozhdorbi, Kostur region; Lerin region; Veles region; *мѝуоp* - Shishtevevs, Gora, which is an addition to the data from BDA, etc. - Arh. BDR; Antonova-Vasileva 2016, 125). Apart from Bulgarian dialects, they are also found in Serbo-Croatian *мачоp* (BER 1986, 698).

The third type of names denoting 'male cat' and mapped in the BDA generalizing volume are words derived from *мачок* (BDA 2001, 435). This linguistic phenomenon has a relatively limited area of distribution, covering a small part of the true South-Western dialects and the West-Rup dialects (for example, *мачòk* - Kyustendil, Samokov, Dupnitsa, Blagoevgrad regions; west of Radomir; west of Pazardzhik; north of Velingrad; Breznitsa, Ribново, Kornitsa, Gotse Delchev region; Ihtiman region; Hrishteni, Stara Zagora region; Leshnitsa, Plevan region; Gorna Lyubata, Bosilegrad region; *мачòk* - Stolnik, Elin Pelin region; *мачаpòk* - Gorno Osenovo, Blagoevgrad region; Baldevo, Gotse Delchev region; *мачлòk* - Devin and Gotse Delchev regions; *мачлѝk* - Selcha,

Devin region, etc. - Arh. BDR; BDA 2001, 435; BDA 1975, map No. 267). It is interesting to note here that the word *марок* 'male cat' was borrowed in Aromanian *mārōlū* (BER 1986, 672, 675). Its etymology is debatable, but the assumption is that it has the same origin as *марукам се* 'enter the breeding season (for a cat) (Piyants, Kyustendil region)' and *мъркам* [purr], whereas St. Mladenov compares it to *маца* and *Мафа* (BER 1986, 672, 675).

Through the names of the male cat described above and their numerous derivatives, including the ones with the most limited distribution, Bulgarian dialects are connected (see **kotъ* and its derivatives), on the one hand, with the whole East-Slavic and part of the West-Slavic language group (cf. Polish and some of the Sorbian dialects) and, on the other hand, (through the names whose root is *мац-* / *мач-*) with all South-Slavic and a few Slovak dialects (OLA 2000, 45, 57).

The close coexistence between humans and domestic cats and the resultant excellent knowledge of the cat's specific features have become the reason for transferring the name of the cat to other real-life objects with similar characteristics. Most frequently, these are animals that bear an overall resemblance to the domestic cat. At the literary level, words derived from *kom* serve as names of the forest or wild cat *Felis silvestris* and the common stingray - a type of shark fish, *Trigon pastinaca* (RBE 1995, 100-102), whereas at the dialectal level, they are used as names of the weasel (for example, *воденѝчко кѝме* - Zagrazhden, Ardino region; *мишкѝно кѝме* - Bani Ladzhe, Ardino region; *пѝнчко / пѝново кѝме* - Ravnogor, Batak, Peshtera region and the like - Arh. BDR).

Certain qualities of the cat have also motivated the transfer of its name to other real-life objects. Thus, names derived from *kom* or dialect names whose root is *мац-* / *мач-* are given to a number of hairy plants or plant parts, which with their softness remind one of cat fur (for example, *кѝме* 'windflower, Pulsatilla vulgaris' - Koprivshitsa region; Enina, Kazanlak region; *кѝменѝце* 'windflower, Pulsatilla vulgaris' - Vievo, Kutela, Slaveino, Smolyan region; *м'ау кѝме* 'sage, Salvia officinalis' - Bani Ladzhe, Ardino region; *кѝменѝца* 'hare's-foot clover, Trifolium arvense' - Ravnogor, Batak, Peshtera region; *кѝменѝца* 'the fluffy globular flowers of the willow in early spring' - Eastern Bulgaria; *мачѝ* 'the fluffy globular flowers of the willow in early spring' - Western Bulgaria; *мачѝнѝца* 'the fluffy globular flowers of the willow in early spring' - Novo selo, Vidin region, etc. - Arh. BDR; BER 1986, 695, 697).

The tenderness and sweetness of the cat have turned its name into a cordial form of address to a loved one and the cat's gracefulness has become the reason for using its name to refer to beautiful women (cf. *мѝце* - slang word, all-Bulgarian). In addition, because of the cat's sharp claws the word *комка* is also used to denote 'metal devices with sharp spikes that are placed on the feet when moving on a slippery, icy surface' or 'anchor', and the playfulness of this domestic animal makes its name suitable for a number of children's games (for example, *сл'ѝта мѝчка* 'blind man's buff' - Gorna and Dolna Vasilitsa, Ihtiman region; Samokov region; *мѝца* 'a game in which each player guards a hole and another player tries to insert a ball or a stick into one of the holes in order to take the place of the player guarding that hole' - Samokov region; *бѝгѝла кѝмка* [fool cat]; *кѝмка со гѝнку* [cat with holes] 'types of children's games' - Ohrid region, etc. - BER 1986, 695, 697; Gerov 1976, 403-404; RBE 1995, 100-102).

The image of the domestic cat is also frequently found in Bulgarian phraseology (for example, **Влизам / вляза с котка в чувал** [get into a sack together with a cat] *colloquial* 'to put yourself at a disadvantage by starting to work together with a person who is causing you trouble'; **Гледам като котка на джигер** [watch like a cat staring at liver] *colloquial, ironic* 'to have an extremely strong desire to taste something'; **Дера котку (котка<та>)** [skin cats / skin a cat / skin the cat] *colloquial, rude* 'to vomit'; **Дразня котките** [tease the cats] *colloquial, ironic* 'to be bad at playing an instrument or singing; to be unable to play an instrument or to sing'; **Изяла ми е котка салото** [a cat has eaten someone's tallow] *dialectal* 'to be worried or silent for no good reason to be like that'; **И котката има мустаки** [the cat also has a moustache] *dialectal, ironic*. It is used in reference to an incompetent person who is proud of his moustache. / It is also used as a response to someone who says he has a moustache, i.e., he is old enough and no longer needs someone else's advice; **И котката на меко спи** [the cat also sleeps on a soft surface] *dialectal, ironic*. It is used as a response to a person who is proud of being rich and sleeping on a soft surface; **Казали (рекли) на котката, а тя на опашката си; накарали котката на работа, а тя опашката си** [they asked the cat to do a job and it asked its tail to do it] *colloquial*. It is used when someone is asked to do a job, but they transfer it to someone else; **Като котка в календар гледам** [look at something like a cat staring at a calendar] *colloquial, ironic* 'to have a stupid look in your eyes, being unable to understand something'; **Като котка мишка вардя (пазя)** [guard something like a cat guarding a mouse] *colloquial* 'to guard something with great care'; **Като котка на зло време навъсвам се (намусвам се)** [sulk like a cat sulking over bad weather] *colloquial* 'to be very sulky'; **Като котки на сирене** [like cats that can smell cheese] *colloquial* 'in large numbers, all together, furiously or with a great desire'; **Като куче<то> и котка<та>** [like cat and dog] *colloquial* 'in a hostile and belligerent manner'; **Като мишка и котка обичаме се** [we love each other like cat and mouse] *colloquial, ironic* 'we do not love each other at all'; **Кога направят котката калузерка** [when they turn the cat into a nun] *colloquial, ironic* 'never'; **Комшийската котка изяла месото, а нашата се наяла; комшийската котка накусила млякото, а нашата се облизва** [the neighbours' cat ate the meat and ours has eaten its fill; the neighbours' cat tasted the milk and ours is licking its mouth] *colloquial*. It is used in reference to a person who has done something bad himself and blames others; **Котка и мишка ще спят заедно; куче<то> и котка<та> ще спят заедно** [a cat and a mouse / a dog and a cat will sleep together] *colloquial* 'it is extremely cold and frosty'; **Котка по гръб не пада; котка по гръб пада ли?** [a cat never falls on its back] *colloquial*. It is used in reference to a stubborn person who refuses to admit their mistake even if he or she has made one as well as in reference to a person who never backs down from his or her opinion; **Минава / мина черна котка помежду ни (между нас)** [a black cat passes between us] *colloquial* 'to have an argument about something insignificant'; **Мина ми <черна> котка път; ще ми мине <черна> котка път; пресече ми (ще ми пресече) котка път<я>** [a <black> cat crosses someone's path] *colloquial* 'to fail to achieve the thing you hoped or wished for, to be unsuccessful in fulfilling a goal'; **Настъпвам / настъпя опашката на котката** [tread on the cat's tail] *colloquial* 'to touch upon a question that is unpleasant for someone'; **Не са ме сукали котките** [cats have not sucked at some-

one] *dialectal* ‘to have class, to be pretty and attractive’; **Не ще котка лоѝ** [a cat will not want tallow] *dialectal*; **Не ще котка мляко (сирене)** [a cat will not want milk/cheese] *colloquial, ironic*. It is used when someone hypocritically declares that they do not like or do not want something that they actually wish for but are unable to achieve or have; **Не яде котка риба (сметана)** [a cat will not eat fish/cream] *dialectal, ironic*. It is used when someone hypocritically declares that they do not like or do not want something that they actually wish for but are unable to achieve or have; **Нямам ни куче, ни котка** [to have neither a dog, nor a cat] *colloquial* ‘to be very poor; to be completely alone’; **Одирам / одера (раздирам / раздера) котката <на прага>** [skin the cat <on the doorstep>] *colloquial* ‘to want to arouse fear in someone and show them that you will be the boss and will not tolerate any objections’; **Падам / падна като котка на краката си** [fall like a cat falling on its feet] *colloquial* ‘to be always right, to refuse to admit your mistake even if you have made one’; **Псе и котка там бяха** [the cur and the cat were both there] *dialectal* ‘it was extremely cold’; **Свил съм се като котка в чумаво (на зло време)** [to curl up like a cat in plague time / in wretched weather] *dialectal* ‘to feel low and sad, to be in a bad mood’; **Сякаш че са го котки близали** [as if cats had licked it/him/her] *colloquial*. It is used in reference to someone who has smoothly combed and sleek hair or in reference to bowls or plates that are licked clean; **Улавям / уловя котката за ноктите** [catch the cat by its claws] *dialectal* ‘to be very skilful at doing something’; **Изхвърлям / изхвърля като мръсно коме някого** [throw someone away like a dirty cat] *colloquial, pejorative* ‘to rudely and unceremoniously force someone to leave a certain place’; **Като коме във вълна добре ми е** [feel good like a cat in wool] *dialectal* ‘to feel very good’; **Като коме ям** [eat like a cat] *colloquial* ‘to eat very little’; **На (но) коме ряпа** [like turnip given to a cat] *dialectal, ironic*. It is used to point out that something is not suitable for someone; **Настъпвам / настъпя комето по (за) опашката** [tread on the cat’s tail] *colloquial* ‘to touch upon a question that is unpleasant for someone’; **Нямам ни дете, ни коме; нямам дете, нямам коме** [have neither a child nor a cat] *colloquial* ‘to be childless; to be alone, to have no obligations or concerns’; **Светвам / светям очите ми като на <манастирски> котарак <през март>** [someone’s eyes light up like a <monastery> cat’s eyes <in March>] *colloquial*. It is used when a person likes someone very much or takes great pleasure in the sight of something; **Като коцаци гледаме се** [look at each other like male cats] *dialectal* ‘to look at each other in a hostile and defiant manner’, etc. - Arh. BDR; Gerov 1976, 403-404; RBE 1995, 95-102).

The reason for this should again be sought in the long coexistence between humans and their pet cats, which has resulted in gaining excellent knowledge of the animal’s habits and consequently, in using its interesting specifics as a parallel to human relationships and types of behaviour. Particularly interesting are the existing parallels in cat-related phraseology in distant, unrelated languages, but this issue will be discussed in detail elsewhere. Thus, the present article provides a list only of the literary phraseological variants, which actually have all-Bulgarian use and where there is a dialect name of the cat with the root *мац-* / *мач-*, it necessarily occurs in the respective set phrase as well.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the variety of names carrying the meaning of ‘domestic cat’ in their semantics is logically much greater at the

dialectal level of Bulgarian than it is at the literary one. All the lexemes that have this meaning are of native origin and their variety is mainly due to the wealth of suffixes included in their morphological make-up, i.e., it is a result of word-formation. In addition, the discussed lexical phenomena form clearly delineated linguo-geographical areas and the phonetic processes taking place inside the word strictly follow the phonetic specifics characteristic of the respective dialect.

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