

ALBANIAN

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1. *Denomination.*

The Albanians of today call themselves *shqiptarë*, their country *Shqipëri*, and their language *shqipe*. These terms came into use at the end of the 17th century and beginning of the 18th century.

Foreigners call them *albanesi* (It.), *Albaner* (Germ.), *Albanians* (Engl.), *Alvanos* (Gr.), *Arbanasi* (old Serb.), the country *Albania*, *Albanie*, *Albanien*, *Alvania*, and *Albanija*, and the language *albanese*, *Albanisch*, *Albanian*, *alvaniki*, and *arbanashki* respectively. All these words are derived from the name *Albanoi* of an Illyrian tribe and their center *Albanopolis*, noted by the astronomer of Alexandria, Ptolemy, in the 2nd century. *Alban* could be a plural of *alb-/arb-*, denoting the inhabitants of the plains (ÇABEJ 1976). The name passed over the boundaries of the Illyrian tribe in Central Albania, and was generalized for all the Albanians. They called themselves *arbënesh/arbëresh*, the country *Arbëni/Arbëri*, and the language *arbëneshe/arbëreshe*.

In the foreign languages, the Middle Ages denominations of these names survived, but for the Albanians they were substituted by *shqiptarë*, *Shqipëri* and *shqipe*. The primary root is the adverb *shqip*, meaning "clearly, intelligibly". There is a very close semantic parallel to this in the German noun *Deutsche* 'the Germans' and 'the German language' (LLOSHI 1984). *Shqip* spread out from the North to the South, and *Shqipni/Shqipëri* is probably a collective noun, following the common pattern of *Arbëni/Arbëri*. The change happened after the Ottoman conquest, because of the conflict in the whole line of the political, social, economic, religious, and cultural spheres with a totally alien world of the Oriental type. A new and more generalized ethnic and linguistic consciousness of all these people responded to this, distinguished against the foreigners as a community of men (*shqiptarë*) clearly understanding each-other, that is understanding each-other *shqip*. This adverb predominates in everyday use, the noun *shqipe* and the collocation *gjuha shqipe* are a recent written coinage.

There is nothing scientific in explaining *Shqipëri* as "the country of the eagle" and *shqiptarë* as "the sons of the eagle".

2. *Extension.*

The Albanian language is spoken by more than seven million people, of whom about three and a half million live within the frontiers of the Republic of Albania, more than two million live in Kosova, Macedonia and Montenegro, and the rest in other countries - principally in Greece, Turkey, Italy, Germany, the USA, and Switzerland. These figures are relative because of the strong flow of emigration from Albania and Kosova in the last decades of the twentieth century.

Historically, however, some distinctions must be made:

a. **The Albanian area** - includes all the territories of Albania and the adjacent zones in Kosova, Macedonia, Montenegro, and North-West Greece, where the Albanian language has been uninterruptedly spoken from the ancient times. The dialectal division of this language is applied over this area, and this is the historical territory, in which the evolution of this language as an entity through its different periods took place.

b. **The Diaspora** - includes the Albanians that emigrated up to the end of the Middle Albanian period (no later than the beginning of the 18th century). As a result, they don't call themselves the modern name *shqiptarë*.

The Italian-Albanians, whose mass emigration goes back to the 15th century, call themselves *arbëreshë*, and mostly live in southern Italy (Calabria and Sicily).

The Greek-Albanians, whose emigration goes back to the 14th century, call themselves *arbëreshë*, but are called *arvanites* by the Greeks. They are settled on Ionian coast line, in Peloponnesos, around Athens and on various Greek islands. They must be distinguished from the *Çam (Tscham)*, who belong to the Albanian area, although *arvanitika* - the idiom of Arvanites - is closer to *çamërishte* as a South Tosk dialect.

Some small enclaves of the Albanian diaspora are in the former Yugoslavia, in Bulgaria, and in the Ukraine.

The Albanian idiom of diaspora represents an historical dialect, evolving in a bilingual situation and without direct connection with the Albanian area. Only in the second half of the 20th century the written variants of diaspora were oriented to Standard Albanian.

c. **The Colonies** - include the Albanians who settled in foreign countries beginning from the 18th century, already speaking New Albanian. The largest colonies were created in Turkey, Romania, the United States, and Egypt. Their idiom is influenced by bilingualism.

d. **The Emigrants** - include those speaking contemporary Albanian and also those educated in Standard Albanian. Massive emigrations of Albanians occurred beginning before the World War I due to the political conflicts, and further occurred especially in the last decade of the 20th century due to the cleansing policy and the oppression of the Albanians in former Yugoslavia, and to the fall of communism in Albania.

3. *Character of the language.*

The Albanian language belongs to the Indo-European family of languages; it forms an independent branch of its own within this family. The identification of the Albanian as Indo-European was not established until relatively late by F. BOPP (1854). The details of the main correspondences of Albanian with Indo-European languages were elaborated by G. MEYER in the 1880s and 1890s. Through his work it has been accepted that Albanian, because of some earlier phonetical changes, like the reflection in a of the short I.E. o, pertains to the Northern European group of languages and is distinct from Greek and from Italic languages in the reflecting of the palatal tectals. There have been evidence of ancient

lexical correspondences between Albanian and the Balto-Slavonic languages, as well as Greek, Armenian etc., and particularly between Albanian and Romanian.

Further linguistic refinement were presented by H. PEDERSEN and N. JOKL. PEDERSEN (1900) acknowledged that the three ancient tectal series were differently reflected in Albanian, and on this basis *Albanian is included to the group of satem languages*, but with some particular developments of its own. It may be considered pertaining to a transitional zone of the central Indo-European area, like the Balto-Slavonic languages and Armenian. Relevant Indo-European features of Albanian are the preservation of the poly-valence of its declension and conjugation endings, apophonic and suppletive verbal forms and stems.

The Indo-European character of the Albanian is to be observed in all its subsystems (DEMIRAJ 1986, 1988). Inherited elements in its vocabulary have been preserved, e.g. all its numerals (with the exception of *qind* - hundred and *mijë* - thousand from Latin) are of Indo-European heritage. In the compound numerals of the type *tridhjetë*, *pesëdhjetë* ('thirty', 'fifty') Albanian has preserved the Indo-European model (*njëzet* 'twenty' and *dyzet* 'forty' belong to the specific vigesimal system). The personal and demonstrative pronouns are generally of Indo-European origin. Ancient changes have been rendered evident, such as in the pre-historic evolution of o > a in *natë* ('night'); a > o in *motër* ('sister', the ancient meaning: 'mother'), and the long e > o in *tetë* ('eight'). There are traces of the ancient inherited opposition of long vs. short vowels, etc.

In the course of its evolution, the Indo-European heritage of the Albanian has undergone a continuous evolution, and *this language has also developed several new traits*, some of which are not encountered elsewhere. In historical times other changes were produced in Albanian inherited elements: the transformation of the ancient three-gender system into a two-gender one, and newly created verbal endings continue to be polysemic. Among the general innovations, that have taken place in Albanian, the following ones could be mentioned:

- morphonologic alternations e/ie ~ i (*hedh* - *hidhni* 'I throw - you throw'), metaphony (*dash* - *desh* 'ram - rams', *dal* - *del* 'I go out - he goes out'), apophony (e/ie ~ o: *mbledh* - *mblodha* 'I gather - I gathered'; a ~ o: *marr* - *mora* 'I take - I took'), diphthongization of o (*ftoi* - *ftua* 'quince - the quince'), palatalization of the stem final consonants in the plural of numerous nouns (*breg* - *brigje* 'shore- shores', *zog* - *zogj* 'bird - birds');
- creation of a particular plural stem opposed to that of the regular (*prind* - *prindër* 'parent - parents');
- creation of a double (indefinite - definite) declension;
- the prepositive derivational and inflexional particles with adjectives, numerals and ordinal numbers, kinship nouns, and genitive forms;
- agglutinated possessive pronouns for 1st and 2nd persons;
- re-organization of the non-active conjugation and the coining of the analytic non-finite forms of the verbs (*me punue*, *pa punuar* 'to work, without working');
- in the syntax: the bound determinatives are placed after the noun, whereas the unbound determinatives are regularly placed before the noun.

As a consequence of its gradual evolution, Albanian has been transformed from a formerly synthetic to *a synthetic-analytical language*.

After K. SANDFELD's *Linguistique balkanique* (1930), Albanian is considered an important member of the Balkan *Sprachbund*. As the main *balkanisms*, the Balkan features, of Albanian that could be listed are:

- the postposition of the definite article, a manifestation of the ancient tendency of this language to place all the bound determinatives after the noun;
- uniformity of the genitive and dative cases;
- redoubling of the direct and indirect objects through the unstressed forms of the personal pronouns;
- disappearance of the infinitive, substituted by subjunctive forms or analytical forms;
- the future tense formed by means of the auxiliary *dua* (I will) in the form of a particle *do* + subjunctive.

Thus, Albanian is to be characterized as ***a Balkan Indo-European language***.

In the Balkan area Albanian has been exposed to external influences. Despite the powerful pressures on the part of Greek, Latin, Slavonic and Turkish, ***the Albanian language has preserved its essential features***. As summarized by prof. SH. DEMIRAJ (1988), "Albanian can be characterized as an Indo-European language which has followed a course of evolution of its own even in those cases, when it manifests concordances with some of other Indo-European languages".

4. *Origin.*

Among Albanian language scholars there is practically no dispute over the thesis that Albanian is related to Illyrian: ***Albanian is a direct descendant of a south-west group of Illyrian dialects***. However, there have been other hypotheses proposed, among which the following merit to be mentioned.

a. The Pelasgian hypothesis. Albanian is the continuation of the language of an ancient people called Pelasgians, a hypothesis rather diffused in the 19th century. J.G. von HAHN (1854) formulated in a strict manner the hypothesis that the Albanians are direct descendants of the Illyrians, Macedonians, and Epirotes, and that in the remotest times they formed a united race together with the Latins and the Hellenes called Pelasgians, with their language, the Pelasgian. A. SCHLEICHER gave full authority to this theory of Pelasgian origin with his family tree of languages. Today this is considered a groundless idea.

b. The Thracian (Dacian) hypothesis. Albanian is the continuation of the Thracian language. This thesis, implying an Albanian-Rumanian symbiosis, is supported by students of Rumanian: H. HIRT, K. PAUL, G. WEIGAND, H. BARIC, I. POPOVIC, and I. I. RUSSU. Only scant remains of Thracian exist, but HIRT saw Albanians as descendants of the Thracians. This means that in the early Middle Ages the Albanians moved westward from the central part of the Balkans, but there are no historical records of such a massive migration. To BARIC Albanian is an Illyricized Thracian dialect.

c. The Illyrian-Thracian hypothesis. Albanian is derived from a mixture of Illyrian and Thracian. N. JOKL supported the idea of an intermediate position between Illyrian and Thracian. However, Thracian is not better known than Illyrian, and it is difficult to distinguish their specific elements, or to trace a dividing line between Illyrian and Thracian. For JOKL the Albanians are probably the descendants of the Illyrian tribe of Dardanians, living in the interior of the Balkan peninsula, who migrated westward some time in the late Roman period.

d. The Daco-Moesian hypothesis is sustained by the Bulgarian academician V. GEORGIEV.

e. The independent hypothesis. H. KRAHE affirms that Albanian presents an independent Indo-European language. The vast work of Prof. E. ÇABEJ on Albanian etymology (1976), an unrivaled synthesis of everything known in this field, refers to remote periods of Albanian as an Indo-European language, without considering the Illyrian language. Following a strict method, the Albanian etymologies would go back to Illyrian forms, which in turn would be traced back to Indo-European roots, like the Italian etymologies going back to Latin forms. E. HAMP (1972) states: "Albanian shows no obvious close affinity to any other Indo-European language; it is plainly the sole modern survivor of its own subgroup".

The whole question of origin is closely connected to the question of the area where the Albanian was formed, and of the place where its transformation occurred. It is not by chance that the Illyrian origin of Albanian was suggested on a historical base by H.E. THUNMANN in 1774. Archeological finds of our days substantiate the theory of the autochthony of the Albanians, and the supporters of the Illyrian origin theory comprise many historians. The continuity of the same material culture on the same territory is a proven fact, but the linguistic argumentation is not very substantial.

The Illyrian language is only known from certain words reported by ancient writers, from a few rare inscriptions and, to a greater extent, from surviving names of persons and places. Despite remarkable studies by H. KRAHE, A. RIBEZZO, A. MAYER, and others, the question of the place that the Illyrian occupies in the Indo-European family is still debatable. Most German, Austrian and Italian historians and linguists, such as: G. MEYER, F. MIKLOSISCH, H. PEDERSEN, P. KRETSCHMER, V. PISANI, W. CIMOCHOWSKI, and others have supported the Illyrian kinship of the Albanian.

Albanian linguists in general - E. ÇABEJ, S. RIZA, M. CAMAJ, SH. DEMIRAJ, M. DOMI, A. KOSTALLARI - advocate the Albanians' autochthony and the Illyrian filiation of the Albanian language. Albanian was formed through the gradual evolution of a group of south-western Illyrian dialects during the period between the final stage of the intensive influence of Latin upon Illyrian and the arrival of the Slavs. This rather long and complicated process occurred in the first centuries A.D. The linguistic arguments put forward by the opposers of the Illyrian origin of Albanian cannot resist criticism. SH. DEMIRAJ (1988): "The Albanian language was formed precisely in the regions of the eastern Adriatic and Ionian seas inhabited in ancient times mostly by Illyrian tribes".

5. Periodization.

Different schemes for the periodization of the Albanian language have been proposed, based on various linguistic and historical criteria: H. PEDERSEN, E. ÇABEJ, S. RIZA, A.V. DESNITSKAJA, B. BOKSHI, XH. LLOSHI, SH. DEMIRAJ. The problem becomes very complex with regard to various hypotheses on the origin of this language. If we take a stance for an independent origin, then the proto-Albanian would have a period of *archaic Albanian*, which would serve as the first ring of a periodization. Otherwise, the proto-Albanian would have to be identified with Illyrian, Illyrian-Thracian, etc. In these circumstances, the most acceptable solution would be a periodization beginning with the first centuries of the New Era.

1. Old Albanian - up to 8th-9th centuries. This period includes the late history of its kin language and the transformation to proper Albanian. The two major dialects of this language were delineated, and the rhotacism ended up. With the reappearance of the national name of the Albanians in the tenth century, the identity of their *Arbëresh* - Albanian language - is firmly consolidated. It is very unlikely that any written documents in the Albanian language exist from this period.

2. Middle Albanian - up to 17th century. The denomination of *Arbëreshe* gradually spread all over the Albanian area. The language now is no longer in contact with Old Greek and Latin, but rather with some other languages, and with different historical stages of these languages in evolution. From that time on the Albanian has a relationship to Italian, Middle Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Turkish. In coincidence with the shaking of the Byzantine Empire in the 12th century, the Arbëresh feudal class rose as a political force and principalities of Arbëri were created. Under these new circumstances, where the common man and the ruling class were the same native people, the historical demand to write the Albanian language arose, and ***Albanian becomes a written language***. The dialectal differences of that time are smaller than in the later period. After the Ottoman conquest, there was an influx of borrowed Oriental words, but in the new circumstances the Albanian already reacted with the participation of the developed culture. The stress for the elaboration of the native language became more acute now, when it was called for as a means to defend the national culture.

3. New Albanian – from the 18th century to present. Beginning with the 18th century the language is known by Albanians under the new name *shqip*. From this time on, the cultivation and the establishment of the literary language emerges as the central problem, and the general evolution depends on it. Even the question of the loan words becomes more and more an aspect of culture orientation. Two important stages can be pointed out: ***the Renaissance phase*** (approximately 1820-1920), and ***the Modern phase*** (after 1920), also known as ***the contemporary Albanian language***.

In the three last decades of the 20th century ***Standard Albanian*** is a practical reality, a basic means of expressing the national culture for all Albanians, within and outside the political frontiers of the Albanian state.

6. Dialects.

Albanian is spoken in a number of geographical varieties, divided into two major dialectal groups:

I. The Northern dialect or Gheg - *gegërishte*, north of the Shkumbini River.

II. The Southern dialect or Tosk - *toskërishte*, south of the Shkumbini River.

Between them is a transitional dialectal group on the both sides of Shkumbini River.

The regional names *Gegë* and *Toskë* gained currency in the second half of the 18th century, after the consolidation of the national name *shqiptarë* for all the inhabitants of various regions.

The Gheg dialect is divided in two sub-dialects: the Northern Gheg and the Southern Gheg, approximately on the both sides of Mati River. With a further sub-division, the *Northern Gheg* is divided in the north-western group, also including the Albanian spoken in Montenegro, and the north-eastern group, also including the Albanian spoken in Kosova.

The *Southern Gheg* is divided in the Central Gheg group, also including the greatest part of the Albanian spoken in Macedonia, and the Middle Albania group, including Tirana.

The Tosk dialect is divided in two sub-dialects: the *Northern Tosk* and the *Southern Tosk*, approximately on both sides of Vjosa River. With a further sub-division, the *Southern Tosk* is divided into the *Labërishte* group and *Çamërishte*, including the region of north-western Greece, not to be confused with arvanites or Greek-Albanians.(GJINARI, 1989).

The dialectal differences between Gheg and Tosk are minimal. The most striking one's are:

- nasal vowels in Gheg, missing in Tosk (*bâ - bëj* ‘I do’);
- long vowels in Gheg with phonological values, missing in Tosk;
- *ë* (schwa) very frequent in Tosk and also stressed at times, missing in spoken Gheg and to which the nasal *â* (*hân - hënë* ‘moon’) corresponds in the same position;
- *ue* diphthong or long *u* in Gheg, to which *ua* in Tosk corresponds (all from *uo > o* diphthongization, *due, du - dua* ‘I want’, *grue, gru - grua* ‘woman’);
- the initial *vo-* in Gheg in a very small number of cases, to which *va-* in Tosk corresponds (*voj - vaj* oil);
- the intervocalic *-n-* in Gheg, to which Tosk corresponds with rhotacism *-r-* (*ranw - rërë* ‘sand’, *venë - verë* ‘wine’);
- terminal voiced consonants in Gheg are heard devoiced in Tosk (*kalb - kalp* ‘make rotten’, *i madh - i math* ‘big’);
- the consonant clusters *mb, nd, ng, ngj* in Tosk are heard as distinct sounds, while reduced to *m, n, nj* in Gheg (*mbush - mush* ‘fill’, *vend - ven* ‘place’, *ngas - nas* ‘tease’, *ngjesh - njesh* ‘press’);
- intervocalic *nj* in Tosk is reduced in *j* in Gheg (*rrënjë - rrâj* ‘root’);
- imperfect tense forms ending in *-sha, -she* in Gheg have Tosk correspondences *-nja, -nje* (*punojsha - punonja* ‘I worked’);
- Turkish loan-words in Gheg are paroxytonic, in Tosk oxytonic (*ág - agá, káfe - kafé* ‘coffee’);
- difference in the definite forms of the nouns in *ue/ua*: (Gheg *thue - thoni*, Tosk *thua-thoni* ‘finger-nail’);
- Gheg preserves the endings of verbs with consonantal stem, Tosk omits the endings (Gheg *un hapi* Tosk *unë hap* ‘I open’);
- Tosk preserves the endings of the participles, Gheg omits the endings (*hapur - hap* ‘opened’, *larë - la* ‘washed’);
- presence of the reflexive pronoun *i vet* his own in Gheg, missing in Tosk;
- presence of an infinitive form in Gheg (*me shkue* ‘to go’), absence in Tosk, replaced by a circumlocution (*për të shkuar*);
- presence in Gheg of a future tense with the present of the auxiliary "to have" plus the infinitive of the verb (*kam me shkue* ‘I will go’), missing in Tosk;
- deverbative adjectives in Gheg, absent in Tosk, expressing possibility with the suffix *-shem*, different from passive participial adjectives (*i punueshem* cultivable - *i punuem* cultivated).

In general, Tosk has been more innovative in the previous period, while Gheg is today more reductive. Gheg and Tosk are mutually intelligible, and in a small country with recent great demographic movements, the old regional divisions are becoming more and

more conventional. The historical dialects spoken in Italian and Greek enclaves reflect the Tosk origin.

7. Structure.

The structure of Albanian, particularly the grammatical categories and the syntax are much like those of other European languages.

Phonetics. Standard Albanian has 7 simple vowels (*a, e, ë, i, o, u, y*) and 29 consonants. They are represented by Latin letters singly, in combinations with *h* (*dh, sh, th, xh, zh*) and *j* (*gj, nj*), doubled (*rr, ll*), and with diacritics (*ç* for *tsch* and *ë* for schwa). The consonants are divided into the voiced (*b, v, d, z, x, xh, zh, dh, gj, g*), unvoiced (*p, f, t, s, c, ç, sh, th, q, k, h*), and sonants (*m, n, nj, r, rr, l, ll*).

The accent is fixed and, with rare exceptions (*i madh - të mëdhenj* ‘big’), it does not change place: A typical Albanian word is a paroxytonic disyllabic with trochaic rhythm. Even monosyllabic words in their different and numerous grammatical forms result as bisyllabic words, e.g. *mal* ‘mountain’ is transformed as a definite noun to *mali*, and during the declension to singular *mali, malit, malin*, in plural *male, malet, malesh*. The same happens with verbs, e.g. *pi* ‘drink’ during the conjugation results in *pimë, pini, pinë, pija, pije, pinte, piva, piu, pirë* etc.

The *Phonetics of Albanian* was published in 1984 (*Fonetika*). In 1996 DEMIRAJ published the historical phonology (*Fonologjia historike e shqipes*).

Morphology. The grammar of Standard Albanian distinguishes 10 parts of speech.

Nouns show overt gender, number, and five cases. In the definite form the masculine nouns add the suffix-article *-i* (*det, -i* ‘sea, the sea’), or *-u* (*krah, -u* ‘arm, the arm’); the feminine nouns add *-a* (*liri, -a* ‘freedom, the freedom’). Neuter forms are becoming obsolete, and are distinguished by the addition of the neuter singular article *-t(ë)*, *-it* (*ujë-t* ‘water, the water’, *të ecur, -it* ‘walking, the walking’), the masculine article *-i* being its substitute (*ujë, uji*). The declension of neuter nouns is otherwise identical with that of masculine nouns.

Noun plurals are notable for the irregularity of a large number of them. A group of masculine nouns results identical with the feminine plurals and agrees with adjectives in feminine forms, a sign of the weakening of the gender in plural (*male të larta* ‘high mountains’, a masculine plural, like *shtëpi të larta* a feminine plural). All the three genders have *-t* in the definite plural.

The system of cases is well preserved. Of the five cases, the nominative and accusative, singular and plural indefinite are alike; so are the genitive and dative, singular and plural (nominative *burrë* ‘man’, accusative *burrë*; genitive *burri*, dative *burri*). The ablative singular is identical to the dative singular (*burri*); the ablative plural also may end in *-sh* (*burrash*), and like the singular, functions almost like an adjective (*mur guri* ‘stone wall’, *sëmundje grash* ‘women's disease’). The suffixed article furnishes Albanian with a distinct set of endings, that gives to the Albanian noun a distinct paradigm for the definite form. Another characteristic is the connecting particle, linking a noun with a following genitive, and

sharing a number of features with the postpositive definite article (*shtëpia e babait* 'father's house', *shtëpisë së babait* 'to the father's house').

Adjectives are of two distinct types: a) Adjectives preceded by the connecting particle (*q̈ embël* m. 'sweet', *e ëmbël* f. 'sweet'). The presence of the adjectives with a proclitic particle is not found in any other European language. They are invariable, except when forming feminine and plural, and are derived from nouns, adverbs, participles (*i mirë, i djeshëm, i shkruar* 'good', 'yesterday's', 'written'); b) Simple words, without particle, derived from nouns, other adjectives, and verbs, also including compound adjectives (*trim, emëror, bukurosh, kërkues, zemërmadh* 'brave', 'nominal', 'pretty', 'exigent', 'great-hearted'). The adjectives after the nouns are uninflected, only the particle changes in agreement with the preceding noun. Adjectives are placed before the nouns for emotive or stylistic emphasis; in this case they take over the inflection of the noun, the latter being uninflected. The greatest part of the adjectives can be substantivized.

Verbs have roughly the number and variety of forms found in Italian or French, and are quite irregular in forming their stems. The verb system includes many archaic traits, such as the retention of distinct active and middle personal endings (as in Greek), and the change of a stem vowel *e* in the present to *o* (from **e*) in the past tense, a feature shared with the Baltic languages: *mbledh - mbloodha* 'I gather, I gathered' (HAMP, 1972).

There are six moods and also non-conjugated forms. The moods are: indicative, subjunctive, conditional, optative, admirative, and imperative. The non-conjugated forms are: participle, gerund (*duke* + participle), and infinitive. Gheg infinitive *me* + participle is present in various collocations of Standard Albanian (*domethënë* 'that is'; *meqenëse* 'since, as'; *duke qenë se* 'in view of the fact that'); the Tosk form *për të* + participle corresponds to it. The admirative mood is peculiar to Albanian. The present form is a compound past participle + *kam* (*punokam* 'What a wonder, I am able to work! / I am at work!'). There is only a passive participle, the active form is traced in adjectives and nomina agentis (*kërkues* 'researching / researcher'). The indicative mood is rich with tenses; aorist is distinguished from imperfect and compound perfect tenses. There is also a number of analytical forms: *pa bërë, me të bërë, një të bërë, së bëri*.

Albanian grammar includes as *pronouns* 7 groups: personal, reflexive, demonstrative, possessive, interrogative, relative, and indefinite. The personal pronouns are not obligatory in building a sentence, as they are in German, English or French, and in the spoken language they are often omitted. They have weak (shortened) forms in the dative and accusative, very alike to French. These proclitic forms become enclitic when joined to the imperative: *jepia = ia jep* 'give it to him'. The 3rd person of personal pronouns *ai, ajo* 'he, she', plural *ata, ato* 'they', also serve as demonstratives, the correlative forms of them being respectively *ky, kjo* 'this', plural *këta, këto* 'these'. In the cases where English and German use the 3rd person neuter forms ('it' and 'das'), the Albanian language uses the feminine forms: *ajo, kjo*. The possessive adjectives follow the noun they qualify, but 1st and 2nd person with kinship names also are placed before the noun (*im bir - biri im* 'my son', vs. *libri im* 'my book'). They are declined like the adjectives, i.e. agree with the antecedent noun in person and number. The forms of the possessive adjectives are of extreme complexity, denoting at the same time the owner and the possessed.

Very characteristic for the Albanian prepositions is their use with the nominative (*nga, te*), and with some adverbs (*për, deri*).

Syntax. The structure of the Albanian sentence does not differ very much from the other European languages, and the written language is strongly influenced by them. The word order is relatively free, but the subject is not obligatory. Passive constructions are characteristic for the written language. The bound determinatives are placed after the noun, whereas the self-sufficient determinatives are placed before the nouns (*ky djalë, disa djem* 'this boy, some boys'). When a definite noun or one taken as already known is the direct object of the sentence, a pronoun in accusative that repeats this information must be inserted in the verb phrase.

Some aspects of the structure of the Albanian language are mentioned in other parts of this paper.

The academic grammar of the Albanian was published in 1976, and the second revised edition 1995 (*Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe*); the syntax was published in 1976 and 1983 (*Sintaksa*).

8. Vocabulary.

The core of the Albanian vocabulary, i.e. the part that constitutes its specific nature, is the stock of the words which Albanian inherited from its "parent" language of Indo-European character (see: *Origin*). It is understood that there are some words of pre-Indo-European origin, but their separation is extremely difficult. This inherited stock has continuously been enriched by derived, compound and agglutinated words in the course of the evolution of Albanian itself, as well as by newly coined words. An important part of the Albanian vocabulary is the collocations and the idioms, especially in the spoken language. A group of no more than fifty verbs and nouns have a very large set of phraseological collocations.

Together with the common Indo-European words (*afër* 'not far', *at* 'father', *bar* 'to bear', *bëj* 'do', *i butë* 'soft', *çel* 'open', *diell* 'sun', *dimër* 'winter', *djeg* 'burn', *dhëndër* 'son-in-law', *gjarpër* 'snake', *ha* 'eat', *jam* 'be', *kam* 'have', *marr* 'take', *mirë* 'well', *natë* 'night', *pesë* 'five', *them* 'say', *i vogël* 'small') from its kin language, Albanian has inherited some ancient borrowings from Old Greek and Latin. According to A. THUMB (1926) there are more than 20 Old Greek elements of Dorian origin in Albanian, and the list since has been enlarged.

The number of Latin loanwords in Albanian is relatively great. It is a consequence of the long Roman dominance - the long political and military administration, the presence of military camps (*castra*), veterans and colonists, and the roads built through the hinterland - but the Albanian language escaped the romanization. The oldest layer of the Latin elements penetrated into the "parent" language before the New Era. Some word-building affixes have also penetrated through the Latin borrowings (ÇABEJ 1974). Latin loanwords in Albanian attest to the similarities in development of the Latin spoken in the Balkans and of Rumanian.

A rather interesting and complicated problem is that of the ancient Albanian-Rumanian lexical correspondences, dating from a pre-Slavonic period. According to prof. ÇABEJ (1975) they can be explained by their long neighbourhood with each other. SH. DEMIRAJ (1988) thinks that words of this ancient layer may have partially been a common Indo-European stock of the kin language for the Albanian and the substratum for Rumanian, that they may have partially penetrated from the one language to the other, and that some others may have been inherited from a more ancient Balkan language. The presence of a large nomadic population of Aromanians (Wallachs) in south-east Albania is a factor not to

be excluded. During the Middle Ages, coinciding with the period of the Middle Albanian, the Roman influence continued on the coastal belt mostly from Venetian dialect at the beginning, meanwhile the Greek loanwords penetrated into Albanian mostly through the spoken idiom chiefly into the Southern Albanian dialect. Yet two new factors emerged because of the Slavonic invasion and the Ottoman conquest.

The introduction of Slavjanisms into Albanian should have started after the cessation of rhotacism in the Southern Albanian dialect. The Slavonic loanwords are of various chronological and geographical stratification. Slavonic borrowings of the Southern and Middle Albanian dialects are of Bulgarian origin, whereas those of the Northern Albanian dialect are of Serbian provenance. The influence of Russian was felt upon the written language after the World War II, particularly through loan-translations.

The first Turkish loanwords date since the end of the 14th century, but the greatest part of them penetrated into Albanian after the 17th century. Orientalisms were adopted with the Oriental way of life, and their substitution was the main target of purist tendencies connected with the Renaissance movement (second half of the 19th century). The status of Orientalisms in Modern Albanian is very complex and rich with stylistic possibilities.

During the last two centuries the Albanian vocabulary has been intensively enriched through countless neologisms and borrowings. Two opposed trends have been marked out. The first has been the purification of many Turkish, Greek, Slavonic, and Romance loanwords. In contrast, Romance loan-words (modern Italian and French), and in recent times English ones too, have inundated the written language, necessitated by the demands of technology, science, culture, art, political and social life, and strongly favoured by television and media. International words are present in Albanian in the same measure as in other European languages.

The most comprehensive Albanian dictionary is *Fjalor i gjuhës së sotme shqipe*, published by the Academy of Sciences in 1980.

9. *The written language.*

The first attempts to write the Albanian language are to be found in 12th-13th centuries. It is understandable that the first documents may have been trade, economic, administrative, and religious writings, compiled by low-rank clerics. A Dominican friar, Guillelmus Adae, known as Father Brocardus, noted in a pamphlet he published in 1332 that "the Albanians have a language quite other than the Latins, but they use the Latin letters in all their books". In a manuscript of decrees and orders, compiled in 1462 by Pal Engjëlli, Archbishop of Durrës and collaborator of George Kastrioti-Skanderbeg, we find the first written sentence, a baptismal formula, in Albanian.

The first book in the Albanian language, as far as it is documented, was published in 1555 by Gjon Buzuku under the title *Meshari* (Missal). The first published dictionary is a 17th century bilingual Latin-Albanian dictionary published in 1635 by Frang Bardhi. The same century saw the publication of a number of other works on didactic religious themes. Writings were scanty in the 18th century, but increased considerably in the 19th century with the advent of the National Awakening. The first New Testament in Albanian was published in 1827. The introduction of Albanian in public worship was considered as a step towards the national cultural identity. The literary production continued through the 19th century in the Italian enclaves.

The written Albanian of the 19th century was not a simple continuation of the earlier tradition. A number of problems pertaining to this arose repeatedly and conditions for solving them were very unfavourable until 1912, the year of the independence from the Ottoman rule. The linguistic problem was a crucial one in the programmes of the National Revival. But the time was not ripe for claims to a unique standard language, particularly in a country in which there were no centres of printing or publication, and no schools and newspapers until the end of the 19th century. Three principal stages can be outlined in the process of the crystallization of the written literary Albanian.

1. *The National Renaissance* from the first decades of the 19th century till the first decades of the 20th century. The Renaissance was a definite cultural orientation, making the national unity its main factor. In Albanian culture in general, this period coincides with the prevalence of romanticism.

On the basis of the two main dialects of Albanian, two literary varieties arose; and within these there was a variety of linguistic usage. The authors were mutually acquainted with them, without any tendency of rivalry notable. The first author to consistently acknowledge this division was K. Kristoforidhi, who published his Bible translations simultaneously in two variants. The crowning of this period was the 1908 Congress of Manastir, laying the basis for the standard adoption of the Roman alphabet, the alphabet which is still in current use in Albania – a welcome basis after a long period of the confusing presence of a number of alphabets, randomly used according to the cultural and political orientations of the particular authors.

2. *The Independence period* of the end of the World War I till the end of World War II. This period opens with a very important event: a Literary Committee convened in 1916-1917 in Shkodër. A number of decisions were made on Albanian orthography. The Committee's main orthographic principle was phonetic, i.e. a word's grapheme should conform to its pronunciation. Two sets of different orthographies for the two main literary variants were sanctioned, bringing them as close as possible. The South Gheg idiom of Elbasan, with some improvements, was suggested as a basis for the future gradual convergence of the two variants in a unified literary Albanian. From this moment on, the orthography and the literary language became synonymous for the general Albanian public. The Shkodra Committee decisions marked the new stage of Modern Albanian: the *contemporary Albanian*.

However, the problem now was placed in new circumstances. After the Independence internal socio-political factors gained more and more importance. In the cultural orientation realism replaced romanticism. It was realized that the choice of the standard version is not based solely on linguistic or aesthetic criteria, but also on political, social and cultural ones. Still imbued with the ideals of the Renaissance period, in Lushnja Congress in 1920 Albanians adopted the guidelines set up in Shkodra. By a decree in 1923 the Elbasan version was proclaimed "the official Albanian language". This sub-variant had some influence until the end of World War II, but it did not succeed in becoming the basis of a standard language. As the result of the objective development, the two main literary variants continued their convergence, but at the same time consolidated themselves as separate entities.

At the end of the period, when necessity for a sole standard variant was pressing, the rivalry between the two main variants became evident. Parallel to the old idea of their convergence, the option of preserving the situation or even enlarging the differences between

the two main variants emerged. It was an endeavour to transform the two variants into two different culture orientations, based on geographic, ethnographic, dialectal, religious and other differences, even calling in question the national unity. A concentration of all of this was the slogan: the bidialectal Albanian language corresponds to the two-headed eagle in Albanian flag. The present-day controversy is rooted in this debate, but the dispute on the national Albanian language was interrupted by the Second World War.

3. *The Standard Albanian.* The establishment of the dictatorship in Albania after the War had an impact on every aspect of life of this nation, linguistic problems not excluded. Among them, two sides of the language question merit attention. First, the all-embracing urge of the party-state to standardize the life after an ideological pattern resulted in the goal, followed by the regime, to unify the Albanian language. Second, there was an inner objective development of the language itself, corresponding to the evolution of the modern times. It would be flippant to ignore the demands of a centralized state in our times, and of a culture against a background of mass media, mass demographic movements, mass telecommunications, mass propaganda, etc.

After a long, complicated historical process, the time appeared ripe for one of the forms of "cultivated Albanian" to become the standard language. Some principal events marked the road of this process.

Two conferences in 1952 focused on the question of "the national literary language". In the report presented to the second conference (September 1952), Dh. S. Shuteriqi advocated that the literary Tosk has been predominant over literary Gheg. Shuteriqi's report met with opposition. Professors A. Xhuvani and E. Çabej insisted on an evolutionary process of several generations, awaiting for a steady rapprochement of the two dialects in writing. However, an end was already put to the long and complicated debate, which was to be revived forty years later.

The National Conference on Orthography in 1953 recommended the furthering of the process of orthographic unification, implying that literary Albanian should be based on the Tosk modified orthographic variant. The Tosk variety - more unified and intensively enriched - predominated in official and semi-official publications. In 1956 an orthography treated in detail the problems of unification, and made a step forward in the standardization of the two literary variants still in use at the time. The two-variant solutions diminished a great deal. Yet the literary Gheg - more diversiform, because the Gheg dialect in itself has more marked subvarieties - was restricted to belletristic, theatre, films, humour and songs. The *de facto* general public usage had already established that the new standard language would be based on many features (especially in phonetics) common to most Tosk varieties, but not excluding a few features from Gheg. The vocabulary and the idioms were seen as a common part of the Albanian language, regardless of the dialectal forms of their provenance.

The most effective step towards standardization was taken in 1967 with the publication of a set of orthographic rules: *Rregullat e drejtshkrimit të shqipës*, aiming to represent a uniform national language. Three conferences, in 1952, 1957, 1965 were organized in Kosova, too. The *Orthography* published in 1964 was the most advanced codification of the Gheg variant, including new elements of convergence. A turning point was the Linguistic Conference of Prishtina in 1968, which adopted the literary language in use in Albania, abandoning the Gheg standard, and following the principle of "One nation - one language". The road was opened for the *Congress of Orthography* in 1972 in Tirana, with authoritative representatives from Albania, Kosova, Macedonia, Montenegro and Italy.

The Congress of Orthography adopted a Resolution. It is considered a turning point in the standardization of the Albanian language. Important academic publications completed the picture of a stabilized and elaborated national language: orthographic rules (1973) and an orthographic dictionary (1976), the grammar (1976), and the dictionary of the contemporary Albanian (1980). Two new journals for the cultivation of the language ('Sprachpflege') were established: *Gjuha jonë* (1981 in Tirana), and *Gjuha shqipe* (1984 in Prishtina). A seminar on the problems of the literary language was held in Prishtina in 1980 (proceedings published in 1983). Another language conference "Albanian National Literary Language and Our Epoch" was organized in Tirana. This time a new goal was set: to go further in standardizing the spoken language, a fanciful target propagated by Prof. A. Kostallari.

The use of the uniform standard variety became obligatory after 1972, and new literary texts were no longer printed in the Gheg variety. People in Kosova were consciously using the standard variety in official activities, in media, and in literary works to the utmost of their abilities. The threat by the Serbians to invent a different Albanian language to be called "shiftarski jezik" was an important factor for the Kosova Albanians to adopt the Standard Albanian, as a means of their national identification with the rest of all Albanians (LLOSHI, 1991). The effects of 1972 Congress were immediate throughout all the Albanian-speaking world. Even books on Albanian grammar prepared by foreigners were based on the uniform literary standard, and the foreign radio stations broadcasting in Albanian accepted the standard form. The objective necessity predominated over all prejudices.

Standard Albanian is now able to respond to all the needs and demands of social, economic, political, cultural, artistic and intellectual life. Regional varieties survive in everyday conversation and in fiction, and are used for stylistic effects, but this is not so different from the circumstances in other standard languages in Europe. In fact, the written language differs little from the current language. The written variety influences the spoken language, being a prestige variety.

10. *The controversy.*

The great changes in Eastern Europe in 1989 shook the rigid totalitarian regime in Albania; the first democratic elections were held in March 1991. From its beginning, the "democratic revolution" in Albania was accompanied by a strong linguistic component. Public activities, political manifestations and violent demonstrations fostered a widely aired desire to destroy the rigorously controlled and fossilized language of the orthodox Communism ideology. Some people hoped that the demolition of the ultra-centralist and authoritarian pattern of the old regime would be echoed in the field of the language and, more generally, in every aspect of the culture. A type of the Russian "Proletkult" wind began to blow. In this atmosphere the unified literary Albanian came under attack. There are some circumstances that represent major set-backs lying ahead for Standard Albanian. It is quite conceivable that illiteracy may well re-emerge in Albania. Nobody appears to be taking particular care that the correct language is used in public activities and various publications. Scabrous vocabulary receives civil rights even among children. The floodgates are opened to uncontrolled and largely unnecessary borrowings. Purism is frowned upon as a part of the former politics of isolationism.

An interesting expression of the newly-established pluralism in Albania is the revival of interest in writing the Gheg variant. In winter 1990, the publication of a short-lived journal began, with the determination "not to let literary Gheg die out as decreed by the Stalinist Albanian government". For that purpose a roundtable discussion took place in Shkodra on July 26, 1992, and a Declaration was published, but signed by a number of "Shkodra linguists" that is so exaggerated, that it makes it sound incredible. A number of journals, among them prestigious old titles Catholic-oriented titles, are published in Shkodra sub-variant. Gheg writers are free to use the variant they prefer.

On 20th-21st November, 1992, to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Orthography Congress, a conference was held in Tirana: "The National Literary Albanian Language and the Albanian World Today". The majority of the participants, including Albanians from Kosova and the diaspora, supported the national standard, but there were also negative reactions to it. The proceedings were not published, the results being considered not satisfactory by the newly appointed leaders of the Institute of Linguistics and Literature. A year later another consultation dedicated to the Albanian language was convened on the initiative of the Institute (October 1993), aiming to prepare the path for "a new strategy" in Albanian linguistics. This time the reaction in press was hot and highly politicized on both sides. Finally, after a summer seminar on Albanian language and literature, organized in 1995 in Tirana by Prishtina University in collaboration with the Albanian Academy of Sciences, when the highest state authorities declared that the Standard language was not a concoction of the former regime, the waters were placated. It was acknowledged that Standard Albanian is an irreplaceable means of national unity, that it has been a product of a long cultural development, and that the most realistic solution is to let it further develop and attain perfection. On the other hand, nothing must obtrude the free use of the Northern variant (as well as of the more limited sub-variants) in literature, in artistic manifestations, or in journalism and oratory.

Within five years the language discussion in Albania was transformed into a naked political debate, and a very aggressive one at that. The most prominent detractor of literary Albanian was A. PIPA (1989), with his book as the source of all topics under discussion. He attacked the Standard Albanian in all its aspects, considering it a phenomenon of domestic linguistic colonialism, a political stratagem devised to perpetuate the cultural hegemony of a minority part of the nation over the rest, and a colossal fraud. Even the historical process up to 1944 came under his criticism.

The vast majority of the authors accept literary Albanian with the same qualifications it was characterized in the last 30 years. A number of contemporary writers have expressly defended the literary language (I. Kadare, R. Qosja, D. Agolli, M. Isaku, etc). Many Albanian linguists, accepting the necessity of a standard language, do not agree with the interpretations imposed by A. KOSTALLARI (1968, 1970 and 1972), but at the same time do not negate his contribution. They discard both Kostallari's efforts to demonstrate that it is a "unified literary *koine sui generis*", and Pipa's orientation as backwards: "The dialects should have been left to evolve in their natural way". They positively assert that the literary Albanian is an ordinary standard language and not a product of the convergence of two dialects; it is evidently based on Tosk phonology and morphology and, of course, in its structure englobes the common fundamental elements of Albanian language. Dialects never evolve to a literary standard or fuse into one common language by themselves. A standard language always involves a choice - it is an act of national cultural politics, reflecting the

historical necessity to create a common national language, not in the meaning of everyday use, but for use in social communication, for the public' use, primarily in the written form, and even as required teaching in the schools. Pipa's supporters are actually fighting not for a Gheg Standard, but for a narrow sub-variant based on Shkodra idiom.

However, even the people that fully support the Standard Albanian are for a revision on more objective and non-partisan basis of the historical process. There are some issues under discussion: the theoretical interpretation, the suppression of the free discussion, the extreme politicization, the expressive insistence on normativeness, the banishment of the Northern variant in new literature, and the means for future improvements in orthography. It is at least hoped that the discussion will continue in a more rational and scientific way, and not off the rails.

The rise of the Albanian to a national standard can be directly experienced as a living and dynamic reality, and hence it is of interest to the linguistic theory, too.

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