Balkan features of Aromanian language

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Abstract

This language, which belongs to the Latin population of Souhern Balkans, was neither 'born' anywhere, nor did it 'emerge' as a new ethnic form. It is spoken by seperate groups of people in the South of Albania, Northern and Northwestern Greece, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and in Diaspora.

This new pattern is a product of the Balkan Latin in the time of the Roman conquest,resulting from the interference of Latin with the native Balkan languages during the eighth century of the dominance of the Roman Empire.

The conditions under which it was born, reciprocal impact of languages upon one another as well as the common historic destiny of the Balkan peoples, made it possible for this language to acquire several phonetic, morphological and syntactical features, already existing in the other Balkan languages.

I.

Aromanian is the native language of Latinspeakers in the south of Balkan which was neither born nor did it emerge as a new ethnic pattern. It is spoken among seperate groups in Southern Albania, Northern and Northwestern Greece, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Diaspora as well. This new pattern language is an offspring of Balkan Latin which was born out of the Latin overlay onto native Balkan languages during the eighth century of the Roman Empire dominance. The conditions under which it was born, the reciprocal impact of languages upon one oneother as well as the common historic destiny of the Balkan peoples, made it possible for this language to acquire several phonetic,

morphological and syntactical features, already existing in other Balkan languages. Some morphological features of Aromanian and other Balkan languages are commonly found :

1. The formal coincidence between genetive and dative case in Aromanian is a striking feature with the same cases in other Balkan languages. We will review only the first type of inflection, characteristic of which are the pre and post positioned articles. Names of masculine gender in their indefinite form, singular and plural as well as in their definite form in singular appear to be with the same form in all cases.Genetive and dative case at these nouns is distinguished from nominative and accusative ones only by any pre positioned qualifier, different prepositions they follow or by case forms of prepositive article for ex : nom./acc. *un fičor (a boy), gen./dat. a unui fičor (of a boy/ the boy's).* nom./acc. *un nel(ring), gen./dat a unui nel (of a ring/the ring's),* nom./acc *fičoru, nellu, gen./dat, a fičoru, a nellu;* among themselves they are distinguished by the function they carry : one as the case of qualifier and the other as the case of indirect object, for ex. *strañľi a nipotu "the nephew's clothes"* and *y- džăš a nipotu "I told my nephew".* Even in Bullgarian where inflection is hardly met, genetive and dative case are not formally distinguished from nominative case. They are distinguished only by their function.[17] The same holds true even with the Greek language, the form of the genetive case is used for the dative one.[18] Among them we notice a functional dictinction, not a formal one, for ex : το είπα του πατέρα μου " I told it to my father" and *αδελφή του πατέρα μου " the sister of my father".* In Aromanian, nouns of feminine gender have a clear cut between genetive and dative case on one hand and nominative and accusative on the other, only in its indefinite form of singular, whereas in their plural indefinite form, these nouns , like masculine nouns, appear to have the same form in all cases, for ex : nom./acc *ună kasă(a house), a unei kasi-of a house*; nom./acc. *ndau kasi, gen./dat. di ndau kasi;* nom./acc.*ndoi fičor(some boys), ndoi čilimañ(some children), gen./dat. di ndoi fičor, di ndoi čilimañ.* All plural and definite nouns, despite their case, bear distinctive features when it comes to comparing genetive and dative case with nominative and accusative one, for ex: nom./acc *fratsiă(the*

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[17] Sh. Demiraj. Balkan linguistics, pg.92 Skopje, 1994
[18] ibid, pg.86 Skopje, 1994

brothers), *kasăľi(the houses), sotsiă(the friends), surără(the sisters), nelără(the rings), gen./dat. a fratslu, a nelălu, a sotslu* etc. The same phenomenon is met in Romanian. But, while the prepositive article of the genetive case in Romanian is met only when the noun in the genetive case succeeds an indefinite noun[19], for ex : o casă a vecinului "a neighbor's house" and casa vecinului "the neighbor's house", the article of the genetive case in aromanian is compulsary in all cases, like in Albanian. When the noun in the genetive case succeeds an indefinite noun, a generative article, obtained from the merge of a preposition with an article, precedes it. It is comparable with the french "article contracte" or the italian " le preposizioni articolate" for ex : *ună kasă dia fetiyi* "a house of the girl" and *kasa a fetiyi* " the house of the girl". Worth mentioning is also the fact that the dative case of aromanian is always followed by a preposition, making it different from Romanian and Albanian where respectively the dative cases do not take an article or a preposition. This makes it have similiarities in approach with western Roman languages[20], ex : al. flas me djalin , fr. *je parle a mon fils*; ar. *y-grest a fičoru*.

2. Like other Balkan languages (Albanian, Romanian, Bulgarian and Slavomacedonian), aromanian is famous for its post positioned definite article. This article in aromanian appears to be also pre positioned at common and proper nouns. The pre positioned definite article is used before nouns only in their genetive and dative case. To tell the masculine gender, the article *al* is used while *aľi* is used for the feminine gender. The last one idicates a progress of the latin preposition ad+ the dative form of the demonstrative pronoun ille/ illae[21].This article has always been a common feature for the proper nouns, ex : aľi Marii, aľi Lefti, al Spiru, al Yorgu etc. Back from proper nouns, this article was later applied by analogy to common ones, but only when the object they denote is known by the speaker and his interlocutor, ex : . *al fiçoru(the boy's), al yaturu(the doctor's), aľi furki(the prop's), aľi kapri(the goat's) etc.* Like other many languages, the definite article of aromanian traces back to the demonstrative pronoun, which being used with a

[19] ibid, pg.92 Skopje, 1994
[20] A. Lazarou, L' Aroumain, pg, 199, Thesaloniki, 1986
[21] A. Lazarou, L' Aroumain, pg, 200, Thesaloniki, 1986

noun, gradually lost its stress, but in its plural and singular form it appears very reducible

3. At many Balkan languages, commonly found are the analitical forms of future which are formed with the auxiliary verbs *want* and *have*[22], ex : *gr.θα grafo, alb.do të shkruaj; bull. shte pravim; maqe. qe pravam;   rum. o să fac.* This construction is commonly found in the northen aromanian, ex va să dorm, va să kănt. The first pattern is constructed by help of the auxiliary verb *vreu* (want) + the present tense of the main verb in its subjunctive mood. This verb, as in other languages, has ceased functioning, it has lost its grammatical features and modal connotation as well. It has become a particle to form the future tense. At other dialects of southern aromanian, it is still in use as a modal auxiliary verb to express modal meaning of willingness and obligation. Both elements of the word group take different forms in person, number, mood and tense. Regarding its meaning, it is equivalent to the Albanian verb pattern dua të bëj (*want to do)* or duhet të bëj (*have to do).* The verb form *am* (have) + infinitive of the main verb, which is used with the meaning of obligatory future is a present phenomenon at many languages. At some of them, the infinitive is replaced by present tense of subjunctive mood, for ex : rum. *am să fac;* alb (in the dialect of "arbëresh") kam të vete (*have to go)*; in aromanian tyhe verb *have* + *infinitive* is comparable in Albanian with the future verb form kam për të bërë (*have to do).* The full future form in aromanian is the construction *u s- neg a kasă; u s-lau strañil'i (I will wash the clothes),*which means the construction of the particle u + the present tense of the main verb in the subjunctive mood. Other forms of future, the future perfect, the future in the past, the future perfect in the past are constructed by the particle u + the present perfect , past simple and the past perfect of the main verb in the subjunctive mood.

4. Avoiding the infinitive and replacing it with other forms of the subjunctive mood or other grammatical verb patterns is another characteristic feature for these languages. As a bare infinitive, we meet it at such patterns : *vra lari, vra măkari, vra nvătsari, vra nidzeri (it must be washed,we should eat,we ought to go) etc.* The functions of infinitive are carried out by the verb pattern obtained by the

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[22] Sh. Demiraj. Balkan linguistics, pg.109 Skopje, 1994

particle of a preposition origin *ti (for)* or the number no longer in function *ună (one)* + some patterns of verbal nouns : skărari, beri, vumeri, tiyari, kăntari, which correspond with the Albanian patterns *to do, doing.* The syntactical functions of these verb forms are generally similiar with the functions of the infinitive in other languages. The verb form "*ti fitseri"* is used with the function of purpose, qualifier, predicative determinant of subject or in other comparative constructions for ex : *Viñ ti zburari ku năsă(I came to talk to her); Am săvdai ti kăntari(I want to sing)*; *Ia esti golă ti ĝukari(She is only to dance)*; *Vilendza y-arămasi ti kuseri(the woolen blanket is to be sewn); Vini ma mult ti videri dipi ti aĝutari(She came to see rather than help);* the same with the pattern *ună fitseri (it's done), ună vineri(his/her coming back), ună lukrari(doing it)* etc. I think that this pattern is grammaticalized and turned into a non-finite verbal form. This verbal form can be followed by a subject, object or adverbial like other finite forms, for ex : *Ună vineri sorsa a ye ši u bătu(on arriving her sister, she beat her); Această vineri dila luk ši s-băgă (After coming back from work, she fell asleep); Una greri a fetiyi ši fudzi (after talking to that girl, he went away); Una adutseri păna a njia ši stătu padi (After giving me my food, she sat down).* However, the frequent use of this pattern with the noun functions, indicates that this grammaticalization has been done recently.

5. The tendency to clear off the distinction between genders at some masculine nouns which denominate inanimate objects, is another phenomenon being frequently met at Balkan and non-Balkan languages. Among Balkan languages, it is commonly found in Romanian for ex : *tren rapid – trenuri rapide*[23]; in alb: mal i lartë-male të larta (*high mountain- high mountains)*[24]*; in aromanian: nel bun-neľi buni (a nice ring-nice rings), ariu bun-ariuri buni(a nice pasture-nice pastures) ;* These nouns in their singular form belong to the masculine gender, while in their plural form they change their gender and they are determined by feminine words. A kind of this phenomenon is met at new Greek as well[25] where some masculine nouns in plural change into the neutral gender. For ex : *ho plūtos-ta plútē, ho sanós-ta saná.*

[23] Sh. Demiraj. Balkan linguistics, pg.181 Skopje, 1994
[24] The grammer of The Albanian languages I ,pg, 92, Tiranë, 1995
[25] Sh. Demiraj, Historical grammer of the Albanian language, pg.207, 1986

6. Number formation 11-19 in arumanian is the same as in Albanian and Romanian, for ex : unspărdzatsi, doispărdzatsi, nauspărdzatsi etc. Thus, these numbers are built by adding a preposition[26] between the small unit and the decimal one : *mbë* (on) for albanian, *spre* for romanian, *na* for slavonic and *sprä* for aromanian. Aromanian differs from other languages when it comes to number building *21-29*, for ex *: unsprăyiñăts, doisprăyiñăts..., nausprăyiñăts.*

These numbers are built by placing the single numbers first, later the preposition and then the twenty. This formation reminds us of the old greek.

With regard to what we dwelt upon, we understand that aromanian, as a language which emerged from the latin layer onto other local languages , bears in its morphological system different features peculiar to Balkan languages, but one can easily come across grammatical features of western latin as well.

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[26] Sh. Demiraj. Balkan linguistics, pg.165 Skopje, 199