

MICHIEL DE VAAN, BRIAN JOSEPH

Old Albanian

Introduction – Part 1: Language and Speakers



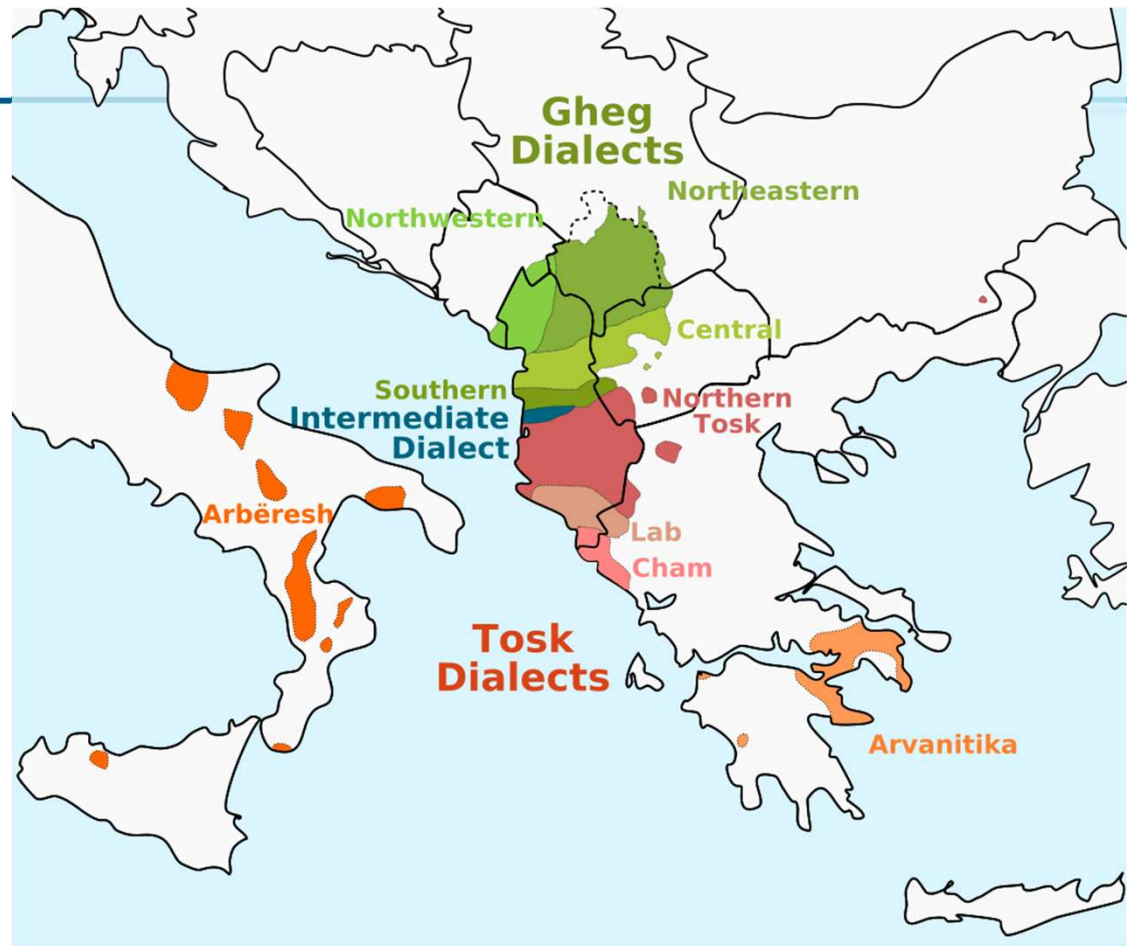
Roadmap

- Modern spread of Albanian
- Albanian in the Middle Ages
- Albanian in Antiquity
- The names *Albania* and *Shqipëria*
- Conclusions

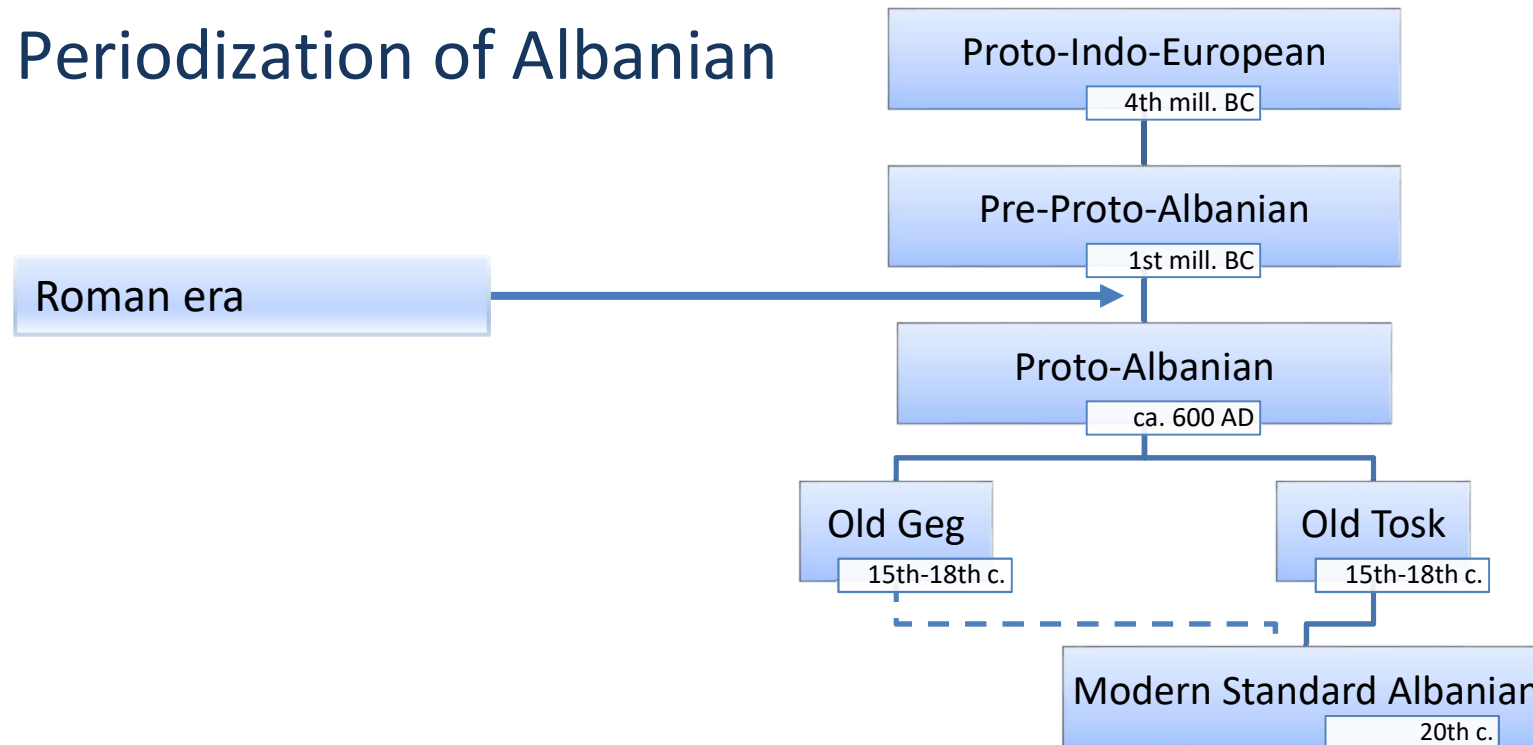
Modern spread of Albanian

- Official language in Republic of Albania and in Kosovo
- One of the two official languages in North Macedonia
- (Old) Albanophone communities in Greece, southern Italy, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Turkey, Romania
- Recent diaspora communities in Italy, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the UK, the US, Argentina, and in many other countries

Modern spread of Albanian



Periodization of Albanian



Albanian in the Middle Ages

- Proto-Albanian (ca. 600 AD) splits into Geg and Tosk due to Tosk innovation(s) (see video on dialectology)
- From 600 AD Slavic invasions of the Balkans. Strong Slavic presence in Albanian toponymy.
- From ca. 1400 conquest by the Ottoman Turks.
- Migration from southern Albania to Greece from the 14th century, and to Italy from the 15th century.

Albanian in Antiquity

- 167 BC: Start of Roman conquest of the Balkans
- Latin as spoken on the Balkans: Balkan Latin or Balkan Romance
- Many Latin loanwords in Albanian
- Balkan Latin > Romanian (in Romania and Moldavia, and Aromanian languages further south and west)
- Balkan Latin > Dalmatian Romance (now extinct)

The Jireček line

Latin vs. Greek in
contemporary
inscriptions

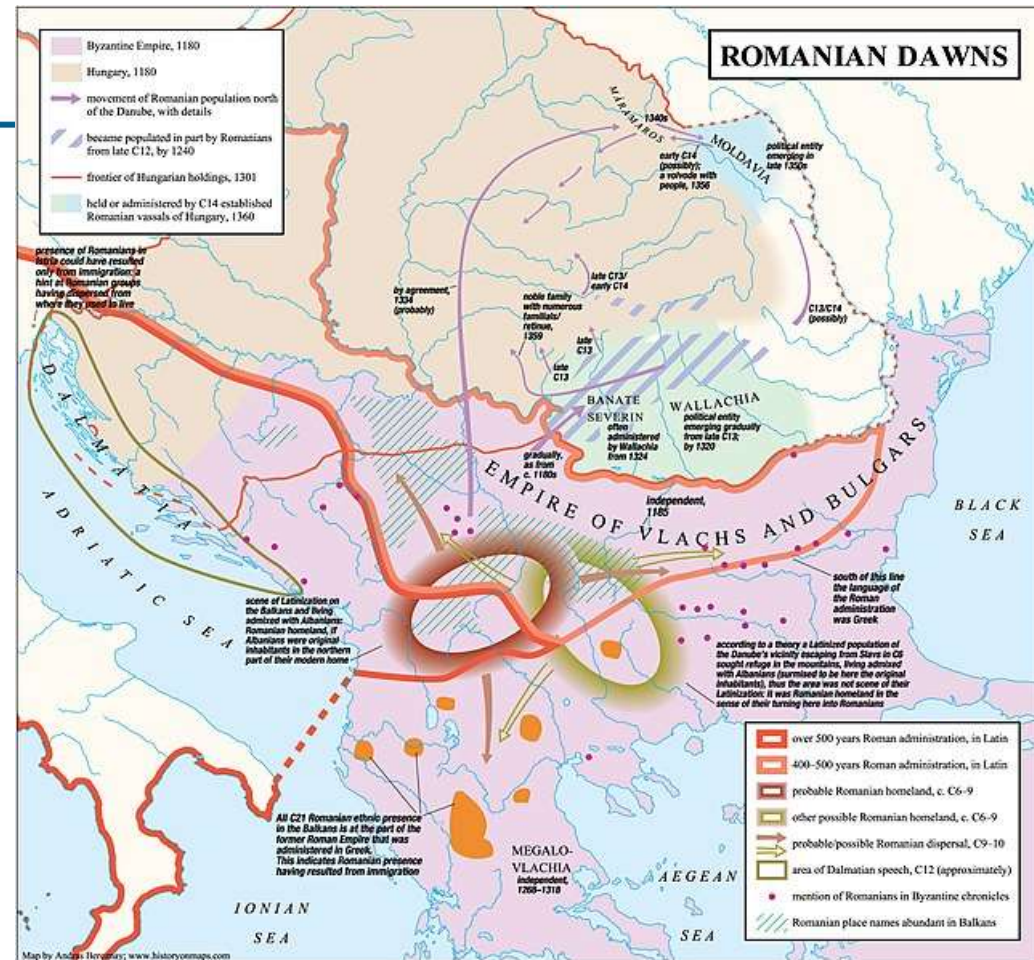


Konstantin Jireček



The rise of Romanian

The 'probable Romanian homeland' (6th-9th c.) is also a good candidate for Proto-Albanian



Pre-Roman Balkan Languages



Albanian as “exotic” within IE studies

- Late attestation
- “Tribal” society in north (cf. importance of *fis* ‘clan’), Kanun law governing life
- Almost totally closed country during Communism (1946 to 1992), led primarily by Enver Hoxha, a period of great expansion of scholarship in Indo-European in general but thus without much access to the living language
- Cement defensive bunkers scattered around country during Hoxha’s era

The communist era



More exotica: the Albanian alphabet

- An orthography that looks familiar (a variety of the Latin alphabet), but with some unusual combinations
- 36 letters:

a b c ç d dh e ë f g gj h i j k l ll m n nj o p q r rr s sh t th u v x xh y z zh

The name *Albania*

stem *Alban-*

Ptolemy (150 BC):	<i>Albanoí, Albanópolis</i> (where?)
Byzantium (1050-1300):	<i>Al/rbanoi</i> or <i>Al/rbanitai</i> (people) <i>Arbanon</i> (country)
Old diaspora:	<i>Arbëresh</i> (< <i>Arbanensis</i>) in Italy, <i>Arvanitai</i> in Greece.
16 th -century texts:	<i>Arbaní</i> 'Albania'
Southwestern Albania:	<i>Labëria</i> (< * <i>Albanía</i>)

- *Arb-* forms show effects of Greek $l > r / __C$ sound change, and *Lab-* forms show effects of Slavic TORT metathesis – these forms must have been taken into Greek/Slavic and later borrowed back into Albanian

The name *Shqipëri*

Modern names:

shqip ‘Albanian language, in Albanian’ (since 1685)

shqiptar ‘an Albanian’ (since 1702)

Shqipëri, *-a*, Geg *Shqipni* ‘Albania’ (first attested 1702)

Derived from: *shqip* ‘(to speak) clearly’

The meaning of the adverb *shqip*

Buzuku 1555	Budi 1616-1621	Bogdani 1685	<i>Kuvendi</i> 1706	Frakulla 1735
'clear, audible, understandable'		'Albanian, in Albanian'		
		Da Lecce 1702 'civilized, respectable'		

Thus: *shqipe* came to mean 'comprehensible language', 'language of the people' (as opposed to Greek, Italian or Turkish) and replaced *arbëresh*.

The adverb *shqip*

The first attestation, in Buzuku:

Enbas andaj thuo prift Pater noster qi vjen
after then say.IMP.2SG priest Our Father which come.PRS.3SG
me thashunë shqip
PREP say.PTCP clearly

‘After that, Priest, say the Our Father, that is to say, loud and clear’

Etymology of *Shqip* (based on Hamp 1999):

- Clarity and “us-vs.-them” ideology
- Never **shqipisht*, unlike other language-adverbs, e.g. *anglisht*, *turqisht*
- Note also *shqipoj* ‘say clearly’, *shqiptoj* ‘to enunciate’
- Source: Latin *excipāre*, derivative of *excipere* ‘to pull or tease out’ = “take-out (in meaning)” (cf. English *gather* for ‘understand’)
- Possibly with influence from other Latin words, such as *explicāre* ‘to explicate’ or *excerptum* ‘extract’
- Thus in origin: ‘speak clearly’ i.e. ‘speak understandably’ >> ‘speak my/our language’, an ethnolinguistic label

Conclusions

We know the linguistic ingredients of the Albanian language, but we do not know who spoke it, and we hardly know where, before the first written documents.

The people living in what is now Albania probably changed their name, and their language, several times in the last millennia – as in most other regions of Europe.



Faleminderit për vëmendjen tuaj!

Thank you for your attention!