

BRIAN JOSEPH

Old Albanian

Introduction – Part 5: Albanian in its areal context



Roadmap

- Modalities for Viewing Albanian Historically
- The Balkan Sprachbund

Modalities for Viewing Albanian Historically

- Albanian viewed genetically/genealogically: Albanian as an Indo-European language, thus as a member of the Indo-European language family – this kind of comparison reveals elements inherited from the proto-language.
- Albanian viewed areally (geographically): Albanian in its setting in southeastern Europe, in the Balkans, thus as a Balkan language – this kind of comparison reveals innovations related to contact between different languages (actually, between speakers of different languages).

Modalities for Viewing Albanian Historically

- Key take-away from different modes of comparison:
 - Albanian morphosyntax has clear Indo-European roots (inheritances) but nonetheless shows innovations that are best understood when viewed in the language's Balkan context (as well as some that are independent of contact)

The Balkan Sprachbund

- Many of the languages in the Balkans show parallels of a structural nature (also lexical but structure is most relevant here) that are the result of intense and sustained contact among speakers of these different languages over several centuries, in a linguistic ecology of *Multi-lateral Multi-generational Mutual Multilingualism*.
- These languages form the Balkan “Sprachbund.”

The Balkan Sprachbund

- The languages in question:
 - Albanian
 - Balkan Romance (Aromanian, Meglenoromanian, Romanian)
 - Balkan Slavic (Bulgarian, Macedonian, Torlak Serbian (the southeastern dialects))
 - Modern Greek
 - Romani
 - Western Rumelian Turkish

The Balkan Sprachbund

- Five branches of Indo-European represented in the Sprachbund (Albanian, Greek, Indic (via Romani), Italic (via Balkan Romance), and Slavic).
- Two language families (Indo-European, Turkic).

The Balkan Sprachbund

- “Sprachbund”, though a German word, is most commonly used in English; “Linguistic Area” is also found.
- The Ottoman period (c. 1400 – 1900) was crucial for the formation of the Sprachbund, due to the “Pax Ottomanica” that allowed for relatively peaceful coexistence, and thus sustained contact, among speakers, especially at the village level.
- The formative period thus overlapped the Old Albanian period and stretched into Modern Albanian.

The Balkan Sprachbund

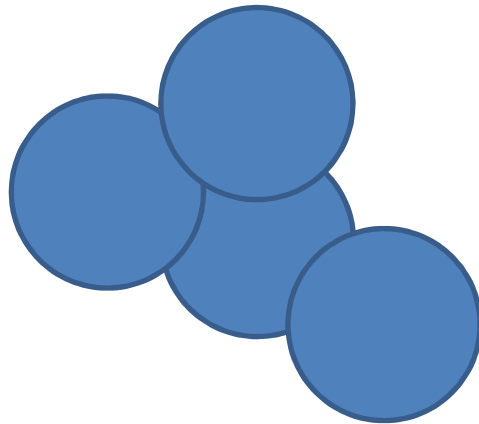
- The convergent features that are found in the Sprachbund languages are referred to as “Balkanisms.”
- More particularly, convergences can be due to various causes, including independent innovation and inheritance from Proto-Indo-European.
- Only those convergent features that are due to contact are (true) Balkanisms (viewing the Sprachbund as a contact-related construct, a “contact zone”).

The Balkan Sprachbund

- Balkanisms need not be found in all the languages; typically, they occur in smaller clusters of the languages.
- They can be highly localized in nature and occur only in a regional dialect.
- In fact, looking to the regional dialects, and not the modern standard languages, is crucial, because contact during the Ottoman period took place at the level of regional dialects (as language standardization had not taken hold).

The Balkan Sprachbund

- The Sprachbund is thus the union of these smaller language clusters that overlap, e.g.:



Faleminderit për vëmendjen tuaj!

Thank you for your attention!