It’s all Greek to me: Missed Greek Loanwords in Albanian

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Abstract

Albanian is a language that has borrowed words and patterns from various other languages with which it came into contact from time to time. One of the most prominent sources of loanwords and loan-structures in Albanian is Medieval and Modern Greek. This paper discusses cases of Albanian loanwords of obvious or probable Medieval or Modern Greek origin that fail to be identified as such in the relevant literature. The discussion starts with a brief sketch of the history, affinities and contacts of Albanian with special focus on Medieval and Modern Greek. Then a classification is attempted of the Greek loanwords usually missed on the basis of their treatment in various works, while exploring the reason(s) why the Greek origin of such loanwords was missed. The main conclusion is that most such etymological mishaps are due to the limited knowledge of the donor language in terms of phonology, lexis and morphology.

Keywords: Albanian, borrowing, etymology, loanwords, Medieval Greek, Modern Greek.

1. Introduction

This article discusses selected cases of Albanian loanwords that, although having obvious or probable Medieval or Modern Greek origin (notwithstanding their origin in Modern Greek itself), in the relevant literature they are either considered to be inherited or attributed to donor languages other than Modern Greek. Such languages are often the ones from which Modern Greek has borrowed the words in question (mostly Italian, Venetian and Turkish).

Albanian is an idiosyncratic member of the Indo-European language family, spoken as sole official language in the Republic of Albania, as co-official language in the partially recognized Republic of Kosovo, and in North Macedonia, while it has been recognized as a minority language in Serbia, Croatia, Italy and Romania. In Greece, Ukraine and Turkey there are some historically Albanophone communities, currently comprising mostly elderly speakers. Altogether, Albanian is spoken as first (and often sole) language by approximately 7.5 million people worldwide (Rusakov, 2017: 552). Two main dialectal continua are distinguished along the natural border of Shkumbin river: Gheg or Northern and Tosk or Southern (Gjinari, 1966; Sanz Ledesma, 1996: 25-29; (Morozova, Rusakov & Ovsjannikova, 2020: 279), with varying degrees of mutual intelligibility, with Tosk having provided the basis for modern Standard Albanian. Albanian could descend from some ancient language of SE Europe such as Illyrian, a view favored in Albania (Sawicka, 2013: 105-107) or Thracian (Vraciu, 1980: 27; Watkins, 1998: 31). Most recent trends speak rather of an “Albanoid” branch (Hamp, 2002: 249-250; Trumper, 2018: 379, 381, 385). Albanian shares most isoglosses with Baltic (Orel, 2000: 13, 212, 250-256) but is also a
prominent member of the Balkan *sprachbund* (Sandfeld, 1930) and has been for centuries subject to the strong and direct lexical, phonotactic, morphological, and possibly syntactic influence of neighboring languages. In particular, Albanian has undergone the direct influence of Medieval and Modern Greek (especially the Tosk variants), Latin/Proto-Romance, Italian, Venetian, South Slavic (mostly Old Church Slavonic, Serbian and Bulgarian), and Ottoman Turkish and, later on, the indirect influence of learned Latin, learned Italian, French, German, Russian and, most recently, English. Minor influences also exist from such languages as Aromanian, Dalmatian, and Old Germanic. Albanian influence on other languages, such as Greek and South Slavic dialects is minor and virtually only lexical, although its numerous traits shared with Romanian could be due to early Albanian influence on Balkan Latin (Ismajli, 2012 and 2015: 271-467; cf. Rădulescu, 1984; Gabinschi, 2012).

The Medieval and Modern Greek influence on Albanian is notably seen in the Tosk variants. Most Medieval and rather few Modern Greek loanwords are ecclesiastical and administrative terms, e.g., *ajzmë* "holy water" < MGk ἁγιασμα ‘id.; lit. blessing; sanctification’; *dhjak* "deacon" < MGk διάκος; *kalloujer* "monk" < Mv/MGk καλόγερος ‘id.; lit. "good old man”’; *metani* “prostration, reverence” < Mv/Gk μετάνοια ‘id.; lit. repentance, change of mind’; *pronë* ‘possession; income’ < Mv/Gk πρόνοια ‘system of granting dedicated streams of state income to individuals and institutions in the late Eastern Roman Empire; lit. care, forethought’; *qiri* ‘candle’ < Mv/Gk κηρίν ‘wax; candle’—without counting, of course, religious terms of ultimate Greek origin that entered Albanian via Latin, e.g., *kishë* (< older *qishë*) < Lat ecclesia < Hellenistic Gk ἐκκλησία; *murgy, Gheg mung* ‘monk’ < Lat monachus < Hellenistic Gk μοναχός (Mihăescu, 1966: 352).

Modern Greek loanwords in Albanian originate in native Modern Greek dialects of South Albania (cf. Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, 1991: 274), as suggested by various phonological traits (Kyriazis, 2001: 18-19; Krmpas, 2007: 110-113), although it is not always easy to distinguish Modern from Medieval Greek loanwords whenever the only distinguishing trait would be some inflectional suffix, which has been adapted to the Albanian inflectional system (cf. Morozova, Rusakov & Ovsjannikova, 2020: 284). Wealthy Albanians often studied in Greece (Sawicka, 2001: 287-295; Kyriazis, 2001: 287-295; Krimpas, 2007: 110-113), which may account for at least a small part of Modern Greek loanwords. Generally speaking, Modern Greek loanwords in Albanian are numerous and productive, even though many of them are now obsolete or dialectal (Southern Tosk). They are mostly nouns and verbs, but adjectives, numerals, adverbs and prepositions do exist among them, while they cover a wide range of thematic areas such as household, construction works, tools and utensils, cuisine, clothing, livestock farming, agriculture, trade, warfare (cf. Surovcák, 2010: 42-46). Some examples are *dhrom* ‘highway’ < MGk δρόμος ‘street; road, way’; *fole* ‘nest’ < MGk φωλιά; *gomar* ‘donkey, ass’ < MGk γοράς; *kallam* ‘reed; cane’ < MGk κάλαμι; *kopan* ‘wash paddle’ < MGk κοπάνι; *kuti* ‘box’ < MGk κουτί; *kwili* ‘cage’ < MGk κλωβί; *litar* ‘rope’ < MGk λιτάρι; *lloj* ‘sort, kind, type; variety’ < -λloi; *nikoqir* ‘good family provider and manager; economically responsible person’ < MGk νικοκύρης; *sgepar* ‘adze’ < MGk σκεπάρι; *tigan* ‘frying pan’ < MGk τηγάνι; *varkë* ‘boat’ < MGk βάρκα; *armatos* ‘to provide with arms’ < MGk αρματώσω; *feks* ‘to shine; to dawn; to polish’ < MGk φέξω pf. of φέγγω ‘to shine; to dawn’; *(m)piks* ‘to coagulate’ < MGk πήξω pf. of πήξω; *plakos* ‘to come down hard on sb.; to slam down sb.; to attack’ < MGk πλακάωσω; *rrufis* ‘to sip, to slurp; to suck in; to swallow up’ < ρουφήσω (Standard MGk ρουφήξω) < pf. of ρουφάω; *sos* ‘to finish, to use up; to complete; to arrive’ < MGk σώόω pf. of σώω ‘to save; pop. to have time to do sg’ *inter alia* /vithis/ ‘to cause to sink into the ground; to hurl down’ < βιβθίσω, pf. of βιβθίζω ‘to sink; tr.’; *zileps* ‘to make sb envious; to envy’ < MGk χελένω pf. of χελένιων ‘to envy; to be jealous of sb’; *pastër* ‘clean’ < back-formation on MGk πάστρα ‘cleanliness’; *akoma* ‘yet; still’ < MGk ακόμα; *anames* ‘among’ < MGk ανάμεσα; *me* ‘with; by means of’ < MGk με; *mes* ‘in/through the middle of; between’ < n. *mesi*, definite form: *mesë* ‘middle’ < MGk μέση (see more examples in Kyriazis, 2001: 287-569; and Krmpas 2007: 116-175). Some learned Greek loanwords (now all of them obsolete) have entered Albanian while learned Greek was the language of education in Albania during the 18th and 19th c. AD (Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, 1991: 285; Kyriazis, 2001: 19-21), e.g.,
The rich material of Medieval and Modern Greek origin found in Albanian comprises also calques (Kyriazis, 1997), e.g., Hyjelindëse ‘Mother of God, i.e. Virgin Mary’ < Hyj ‘God’ + lindëse, f. ‘the one who has born’, calqued on Gk. Θεοτόκος < Θεός ‘God’ + -τόκος ‘the one giving birth’ and punëdhënës ‘employer’ < punë ‘work’ + dhënës ‘the one who gives, giver’ < learned MGk ἔργον + ἐργοδότης < ἔργον ‘work’ + δότης ‘the one who gives, giver’ and grammatical borrowings, namely derivational affixes such as the deverbative suffixes -is and -os, the nominal suffix -omë, or the pejorative prefix palo- (Kyriazis, 2001: 254-261; Kume, 2011: 257; Krimpas, 2017: 440-445). Moreover, Medieval and Modern Greek, which had been itself under the long-lasting influence of (Balkan) Vulgar Latin, is most probably the source of some morphosyntactic traits found in all or most Balkan languages, including Albanian (Krimpas, 2007: 178-188, 254-256; Krimpas, 2017: 440-443; cf. Joseph, 2001: 32), such as the replacement of infinitive constructions by finite ones (cf. Sandfeld, 1930: 175; Tonnet, 1995[1993]: 58), the periphrastic future comprising an indeclinable, grammaticalized WANT- auxiliary and a finite construction, which is much older in Greek than in the other Balkan languages (cf. Sandfeld, 1930: 56; Browning, 1983: 79; Stanišić, 1995: 58-59; Tonnet, 1995[1993]: 80), and the periphrastic future perfect, comprising a grammaticalized WANT- auxiliary followed by a construction identical with the present perfect, i.e. HAVE-auxiliary + participle (Krimpas, 2007: 185-186).

2. Method

Throughout this article, etymological information other than mine derives mostly from Meyer (2007[1891]), Orel (1998) and Dashi (2013) and, to a lesser degree from Çabej (1976) and Topalli (2017). The loanwords selected fall under various categories according to the traits that suggest their missed Modern Greek origin. In some cases, the Modern Greek origin of an Albanian word that is not attributable to other donor languages is obvious only to those who are well acquainted with the Greek vocabulary and its history. In other cases, the Modern Greek origin is suggested by phonological changes that are not justified in Albanian in general or with respect to the particular donor language to which the loanword is attributed. For example, if a Turkish word that exists in Albanian is reported in the literature as being borrowed from Turkish but exhibits a phonological change that could be justified only in case of Modern Greek mediation (e.g. because Modern Greek does not have a Turkish sound shared also by Albanian), such loanword should count as a Modern Greek borrowing. In yet other cases it is the morphophonological treatment that suggests the Greek origin of a word in Albanian. Nouns, verbs and, to a lesser degree, adjectives undergo various morphophonological changes in order to be accommodated into the Albanian inflectional system, and the whole process is influenced by several perceived similarities and analogies between Albanian and the donor language. To find the origin of some loanwords in Albanian one has first to know the Albanian modalities of morphophonological adaptation, since they may vary depending on the donor language. Such variation is due to the fact that Albanian has many layers of loanwords that have entered the language in different periods usually marked by different linguistic phenomena. As far as inflected Albanian words are concerned, the distinction between indefinite and definite declension of nouns and the one between present and aorist stem of verbs are of crucial importance, as the respective treatment of loanwords can often reveal which the donor language is. In the case of non-inflected loanwords, the donor language can only be inferred by means of phonology, lexicon and/or semantics.

A useful methodological tool is the awareness that most borrowed indefinite nouns in Albanian are in fact back-formations, produced by spontaneously interpreting and re-segmenting the definite singular form into an indefinite form and its postposed definite singular article. Such reinterpretation and re-segmentation is made on the basis of perceived

kamillopadhallë ‘giraffe’ < learned Gk καμηλοπάρδαλις (now gjirafë < It/Fr giraffa/giraffe); qindhin ‘danger’ < learned Gk κίνδυνος (now rrezik, not unambiguously connected with It risico).
(morpho)phonological similarities between the Albanian definite singular article and the eventual thematic vowel of the loanword. Thus, by removing the postposed definite singular article one obtains the indefinite singular form of the noun (see more in Kyriazis, 2001: 184-227, 261-264; Krimpas, 2007: 114-115; Krimpas, 2017: 433-434). When it comes to verbs, the morphophonological treatment of the loanword is inextricably connected to which the donor language is. This is particularly obvious in the different treatment of Slavic-borrowed and Modern Greek-borrowed verbs ending in -is and -as (cf. Kyriazis, 2001: 230-233; Krimpas, 2007: 115; Curtis, 2012: 72-73), with the pattern of the Greek-borrowed ones having been transferred also to Turkish-borrowed verbs.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Turkish and Venetian or Modern Greek? Missed phonological evidence

(a) ahur [a hu] ‘cellar, barn, shed’: Mann (1948: 3) marks this Albanian noun as ‘Tk’, which means that it was thought to be a borrowing from Turkish, in particular from ahr [a hur]. However, one should wonder why the central vowel [u] is reflected in the Albanian word as the round high vowel [u], given that Albanian does have the [u]-sound (spelled ë); in other words, if the word was borrowed directly from Turkish, it would be *ahër rather than ahur. One the other hand, Modern Greek has no [u]-sound, which explains why Turkish loanwords originally containing this sound exchange it for an /i/ or, more rarely, /u/ in Modern Greek, e.g., Tk hatir ‘favour’ > MGk yatiri [xa tiri], Tk hanum ‘lady’ > MGk Ɂavoiýmasa [xa numisa] ‘Turkish lady’. Indeed, the Turkish word ahur [a hu] was borrowed into Modern Greek as αχούρι [a xuri], which is obviously the true source of Albanian ahur. One could object that Albanian retains the Turkish [h], while Modern Greek has changed it into [x]. However, since Standard Albanian has no [x]-sound (although the latter does exist in the Arvanite dialect due to Modern Greek influence), a change [x] > [h] is expected.

(b) bojatis [boja tis] ‘to paint’: Mann (1948: 33) marks this Albanian verb as ‘Tk’, which means that it was thought to be a borrowing from Turkish, namely from bojadis- (aorist stem of boyamak). However, one should wonder why the voiced stop [d] is reflected in the Albanian word as its devoiced counterpart [t], given that Albanian does have the [d]-sound; in other words, if the word was borrowed directly from Turkish, it would be bojadis (which does exist in non-standard variants) rather than bojatis, given that Turkish [d] is normally retained in Albanian, e.g., deve ‘camel’ < Tk deve; dolap ‘cupboard’ < Tk dolap. One the other hand, Modern Greek has many verbs in -ατίζω [-a tizo], which derive from -μα-τ [-ma-t] neuter stems such as αρωματίζω [aroma tizo] ‘to flavour’ < áρωμα [aroma] ‘flavour’; ονοματίζω [onoma tizo] ‘to name’ < όνομα ['onoma] ‘a name’, which explains why Modern Greek has changed Tk bojadis- into μπογιάτιζω [boja tizo] instead of *μπογιαντίζω [boja dio]. In Modern Greek the d > t change is also triggered by the previous voiced labial [b], in other words it is due to dissimilation, a usual phenomenon in Modern Greek but not in Albanian, e.g., MGk καμπάρντινα [kabar dina] ‘a trench coat’ < Fr gabardine > Alb gabardinë. Thus, it is obvious that the source of Alb bojatis is the abovementioned Modern Greek verb, in particular its perfective stem μπογιάτιζω- [boja tis-], as is normal with Modern Greek verbs borrowed into Albanian (the same is true of all Balkan languages). One would say that the suffix -is, itself of Modern Greek origin (Kyriazis, 2001: 230-233; Krimpas, 2007: 115; Krimpas, 2017: 434-435), points already to Modern Greek as a source; however, this deverbative suffix has become quite productive in Albanian, and indeed appears in almost all Turkish verbal loanwords, and hence it is not in itself suggestive of Modern Greek origin in such loanwords. This is why most Ottoman Turkish verbal borrowings in Albanian end in -dis-/-tis, e.g. Tk. dayannmak ‘to endure > dayandi- (aorist stem) > Alb. dajandis ‘I endure/to endure’; Tk. kavurmak ‘to roast’ > kavurdu- (aorist stem) > Alb. kaurdis ‘I roast/to roast’; Tk. gezmek ‘to go on a stroll’ > gezdi- (aorist stem) > Alb. gjezdis, which Orel (1998: 134) viewed as a Slavic
loanword from jezdit ‘to ride’, despite that its past tense stem (gjezdisa, -ise, -isi etc.) clearly suggested its non-Slavic origin (Slavic-derived verbs in -is have past tense stems in -ita, -ite, -iti etc., e.g. SSlav. habiti ‘to destroy’ > Alb. habis/habit ‘to surprise, to astonish’ > past tense habita, -ite, -iti etc.).

(c) cimè ['t̠simə] ‘mooring line, rope; cyme’: As suggested ex silentio from Dashi (2013: 131), this word is generally considered as borrowed from Ven cima ['t̠ima]. However, the change [t̠] > [t̠s̠] is not expected in Albanian, which has the [t̠s̠]-sound, but it is the normal outcome of [t̠] in Modern Greek. Indeed, the non-standard word tojma ['t̠simə] ‘top; edge; tip’ (now only in the idiom tojma-tojma ['t̠simə-'t̠simə] ‘narrowly; tight’), itself a borrowing from Ven cima, is obviously the source of the Albanian word.

(d) fanellë [fa'nela] ‘undershirt; sweater’: As suggested ex silentio from Dashi (2013: 201), this word is generally considered as borrowed from Ven fanela [fa'nela] or [fa'neqla]. However, the change [l] or [e] > [l] is not expected in Venetian loanwords in Albanian, cf. Ven lotaria [lotaˈria] or [eotəˈria] ‘lottery; lottery ticket’ > Alb lotari [lotaˈi], but it is the most usual rendering of Modern Greek /l/ before back vowels, reflecting the non-standard [l]-sound heard in many regional variants as an allophonic /l/ before back vowels, cf. MGk λαταρία [laˈxtara] (standard) or [la'xtara] (non-standard) ‘terror, terrible anxiety; craving, longing, yearning’ > llahtar(ë) [lahˈtaɭə]; lloj [loj] ‘kind, sort’ > MGK Λ-Λ ([-loj]) (standard) or [-loj] (non-standard) ‘a collection/swarm of’. This means that Alb fanellë < MGK φανέλα (non-standard pronunciation: [fa'nela]) (itself from Ven fanela). A similar case is Alb llotari [lotaˈi] ‘lottery; lottery ticket’, a variant of lotari (< Ven lotaria), although Dashi (2013: 260) does not seem to suspect that this variant was borrowed from Modern Greek λοταρία [lotaˈria], a regional pronunciation of standard λοταρία [lotaˈria] rather than Venetian. Modern Greek, of course, has borrowed this word from the identical Venetian word.

(e) fortunë [fu'tuna] ‘severe storm’: As suggested ex silentio from Dashi (2013: 214), this word is generally considered as borrowed from Ven/It fortuna [fo'rtuna]/[for'tuːna]. However, the change [o] > [u] is not as usual in Venetian loanwords in Albanian, cf. Ven notar ‘to swim’ > Alb noto{j}, but it is very frequent and well-documented in Modern Greek, cf. Ven/It compàre/compare ‘best man (in weddings or christening ceremonies)’ > MGk κομπάρος [ku(m)ˈbaros]; Ven bastôn ‘walking cane, stick’ > MGk μπαστόνι [ba'stuːni]. It is, therefore, obvious that Alb fortunë is borrowed from Modern Greek φωτοφάνα [fu'tuna], itself borrowed from Ven fortuna (After all, for semantic reasons one would expect for the [o] to be retained in Albanian, as the Venetian word would be associated with Alb fortë ‘strong’). Similar cases are Alb bunacë [buˈnatʃa] ‘calm see; calm, stagnation’ and kuvertë [ku'verta] ‘bedcover; deck of a ship’ and which are not borrowed, respectively, from Ven coverta and bonazza, as implied from the works cited in Dashi (2013: 160, 159), but from Modern Greek μπουνάτσα [buˌnatʃa] and Κουβέρτα [ku'verta] ‘blanket; deck of a ship’, themselves borrowed, respectively, from Ven bonazza and coverta.

(f) fundul [fu'ndul] ‘arrogant, haughty’: Meyer (2007: 156) mentions it as a Calabrese Arbereshë variant of standard fodull < Tk fodul. However, Albanian has no reason to change Turkish [d] into [nd] and [l] into [l], since it has these sounds. On the other hand, Modern Greek is peculiar as to the absence of [l] before front vowels and the treatment of voiced stops between vowels (also across words), since it has to ‘support’ them by a preceding nasal (Krippas, 2019: 114-115). This phenomenon is currently rare in Standard Modern Greek (Arvaniti, 2007: 159-160) and Southern variants, but it was regular in all Modern Greek variants a century ago. Indeed, all Modern Greek words that are borrowed into Albanian and are currently pronounced without the nasal in Standard and Southern Modern Greek, always retain their original nasal in Albanian, e.g., αντάρτης [a(n)ˈdarthis] ‘a rebel, guerilla’ > Alb andart; απεντήκο [afe(n)diˈko] ‘a master, boss’ > Alb afendiko. Moreover, the usual raising of unstressed /o/, typical of Northern Greek variants
but sporadically found throughout the Greek-speaking territories is additional evidence that *fundul* was not borrowed from Tō *fodul*, but from non-standard MGk φουντούλης [fu(n)’ dulis] (itself from Tō *fodul*), now surviving mostly as a Greek surname.

(g) *kalcunja* [kal’ tṣunja] (pl.) a kind of men’s stockings: This loanword is not borrowed from Ven *calzoni* [kal’tsnjı] (pl.) as suggested by Dashi (2013: 109), because in such a case one would expect something like *kalogénë*, *kaleune* etc. The suffix [-u]a] points clearly to the identical Modern Greek καλτσούνια [kal’tṣunja], plural of καλτσόνι [kal’tṣuni], itself a back-formed singular borrowed from Ven *calzoni* (pl.) due to the similarity of Venetian pluralizer -i with the thematic vowel -i [i] of a very large class of neuter nouns.

(h) *kuzhinë* [ku’ zina] ‘kitchen’: As suggested ex silentio from Dashi (2013: 165), this word and its variants are generally considered as borrowed from Ven *cusina* [ku’ zina]. However, the change [z] > [ʒ] is not expected in Albanian, which has the [z]-sound, but in several Modern Greek regional variants this change is automatic before /i/, cf. na ʐʰeze’ [na’ zıste] ‘may you long live!’ = standard na ẓ́eze’. Therefore, the Albanian word is probably borrowed from MGk [ku’ zina], a regional pronunciation of κουζίνα [ku’ zina], itself borrowed from the identical Venetian word.

(i) *ostrogarb* [ostro’ gəb] ‘SW wind’: This rare word, which mostly belongs to the maritime jargon, was not borrowed from Ven *ostro-garbin* [ostro’ga’bin] as suggest the works cited by Dashi (2013: 312), since the suffix -in, which is stressed in Venetian, was not expected to be dropped in Albanian. If the word was a direct Venetian borrowing, the outcome would rather be *ostrogarbi(n)* [ostroga’bi(n)], since Albanian, being a language with a strong dynamic stress, never drops final-syllable vowels when stressed. This phonological fact leads directly to the regional MGk οστρογάρμπι [ostro’ yarbı] as the source of Albanian *ostrogarb*, which is exactly the expected outcome from MGk οστρογάρμπι [ostro’ yarbı], borrowed into Albanian as a definite noun *ostrogarb* [ostro’ gəbi] ‘the SW wind’ and producing the back-formation *ostrogarb* ‘SW wind’ after dropping the suffixed definite article, cf. MGk γομάρι [yo’ mari] ‘donkey, ass’ < Alb *gomari* [go’ mai] ‘the donkey, the ass’ < *gomar ‘donkey, ass’; MGk καλάμι [ka’ lamı] (regional pronunciation of standard [ka’ lamı]) ‘reed; cane’ < kalami [ka’ lamı] ‘the reed; the cane’ < *kallam ‘reed; cane’; MGk λήμπι [li’ taı] ‘rope’ < *litarı [li’ taı] ‘the rope’ < *litar ‘rope’. In other words, the thematic [i]-vowel of Modern Greek words is perceived as the Albanian masculine nominal definite article -i in contact situations (loanwords from other donor languages are treated in analogous ways). Interestingly, the regional Modern Greek word οστρογάρμπι [ostro’ yarbı] is still current in Cephalonia, which lies in the wider Ionian-Adriatic region like Albania and was similarly (and for more time) under Venetian rule (on Venetian Albania see more in Schmitt, 2001).

(j) *bundë* [’ bunda] ‘strong, wet wind; cold caught in cold climates’: As suggested ex silentio from Dashi (2013: 340), this word is generally considered as borrowed from Ven *ponta* [’ ponta]. However, the changes [o] > [u], [nt] > [nd] and, above all, [p-] > [b-], although not unprecedented in Albanian, are not the ones expected in Venetian loanwords, given that they are more recent (in comparison to Latin and Old Slavic ones, where such changes are more usual) and the perception of the equivalence between the respective Venetian and Albanian sounds has not yielded to one or another phonological rule that would justify a different outcome in Albanian. On the other hand, these changes are well-documented in Modern Greek, cf. Ven/It compàre/compare ‘best man (in weddings or christening ceremonies)’ > MGk κουμπάρος [ku(m)’ baros]; Ven cantada > MGk καντάδα [ka(n)’ dađa] ‘serenade; traditional urban Heptanesian song’; It paccottiglia [pak’ o’ ti’ kwa] ‘trifle, trinket; shoddy goods (on ship)’ > MGk (slang) μπακοτίλια [bako’ ti’ kwa] ‘savings’ (for the alternation between unvoiced and voiced stops see more in 3.2 on prokè). All this suggests that *bundë* was borrowed from a non-standard Modern Greek μπούντα [ bunda] for πούντα [’ pu(n)da], itself from Ven *ponta*, with initial voicing due to
the preceding accusative of the definite article, i.e., πὴν πούντα [ti(m)’bunda] > τῇ μπούντα [ti’bunda] > η μπούντα [i’bunda] (back-formed nominative).

(k) sigurt [’siguṭ] ‘sure, certain’: According to Dashi (2013: 389-390) this Albanian word is borrowed from Ven seguro [se’guro] and the stress shift from the [u] to [i] is a recent phenomenon. However, even if the stress shift is a recent phenomenon as argued by Dashi (2013: 389), when combined with the change of /e/ into /i/ in the same word it points to mediation of MGk σίγουρος [’sīyuрос], which is because MGk σίγουρος [’sīyuрос], which comes from Medieval Greek σιγόυρος [si’yuros] (for older σεγόυρος [se’yuros]), itself borrowed from Ven seguro [se’guro] exhibits exactly the same phonetic changes, which are well-documented in Modern Greek, cf. Standard and Southern MGk στρογγυλός [strogi’los] > Northern (substandard) MGK στρόγγυλος [strogi’ilos]; Tk segray ‘a stroll, walk’ > MGK σεριάν [ser’jan] or σερίάν [sir’jan], but less so in Albanian. It seems that the older Alb sigurt(ē) [si’gut(ə)] was borrowed from Medieval Greek σιγόυρος [’sīyuros], while Alb sigurt [’siguṭ] was either borrowed directly from Modern Greek σίγουρος [’sīyuрос] or the variant [si’gut(ə)] (of Medieval Greek origin) changed its stress under Modern Greek influence. Interestingly, Rom sigur [’sigur], Bg сигурен [’siguren], SCr свегурен/siguran [’siguran] were all borrowed from MGK σίγουρος [’sīyuрос], which suggests that this word is a lexical Balkanism of Modern Greek origin.

(l) vardhën [’vāđa] ‘guard’: As suggested ex silentio from Dashi (2013: 442), this word is generally considered as borrowed from Ven varda [’varda]. However, the change [d] > [đ], although documented in older loanwords in Albanian (mostly Slavic ones), is not the expected one in Venetian loanwords, given that they are more recent and the perception of the equivalence between Romance and Albanian [d] has not yielded to some phonological rule that would justify a different outcome in Albanian. On the other hand, this change is well-documented in Modern Greek, cf. Ven moneda ‘coin’ > MGK μονέδα [mo’nedā] ‘coin; money’; Ven corda ‘string’ > MGK κόρδα [’korda], which suggests that the (now obsolete) MGK βάρδα [’varda] ‘guard’ (still alive as a toponym in Peloponnese), itself from Ven varda, is probably the source of the Albanian word.

3.2 Italian and Latin or Modern Greek? Missed morphophonological evidence

(a) bizele [bi’zele] ‘(a) pea’: According to Topalli (2017: 219) this word is borrowed from It pisello [pi’zəllo]. However, its initial [b] makes it improbable for this word to be borrowed from Italian. More importantly, the fact that its definite form is bizeḷa [bi’zeli] ‘the pea’, almost identical to the Modern Greek μπιζέλια [bizeḷiā], plural of μπιζέλι [bi’zeli], itself borrowed from Ven biseli, suggests that the Albanian word was borrowed from the above-mentioned Modern Greek plural, which was reinterpreted as a feminine definite noun of the -e ~ -ja class and re-segmented accordingly. Exactly the same has happened with other Albanian words of missed Modern Greek origin such as daulle ‘drum’ < dauljia ‘the drum’ < MGK νταούλια [da’uḷa] ‘drums’ < νταούλι [da’uḷi] ‘drum’ < Tg davul; ravjole < ravjolja < MGK ραβίολια [ra’vjoḷa] (pl.) < It. raviolì [ravi’oli], even though Dashi (2013: 365) thinks it is borrowed from It ravio(lo)/-i. See also (Kyriazis, 2001: 430-431) on mandile ‘kerchief’ < mandilja ‘the kerchief’ < MGK μαντιλιά [man’diḷa] ‘kerchiefs < μαντιλι [man’diļ] ‘kerchief’ < Lat mantile, the Modern Greek origin of which in Albanian was not recognized neither by Meyer (2007: 303) nor by Orel (1998: 244), who consider it a direct borrowing from Latin.

(b) fashqe [fa’ʃçe] ‘swaddling band’: According to Meyer (2007: 147) and Orel (1998: 94) this word is borrowed from Lat fascia (Orel, Ibid., thought it was a singularized plural and connected it to fashe, which in fact is borrowed from It fasciā, a descendant of Lat fasciā). However, the stressed final [-e] points clearly to the regular change of Modern Greek -tā [-ṭa, -tā] suffix, cf. MGK φολιά [fo’lja] > Alb foḷe [fo’le], which suggests that the Albanian word was borrowed from MGK φασκιά [fa’sciae] (now mostly plural: φασκίκες [fa’sces]). The change [s] > [ʃ]
is usual in Albanian before [çç], cf. MGk σκέτο [sceto] (< It schietto [‘scjet:o]) ‘without additional ingredients; plain’ > Alb shqeto [‘ʃcɛtɔ].

(c) prokë [‘pxɔka] ‘hobnail’: According to Meyer (2007: 404), Orel (1998: 347), and (ex silentio) Dashi (2013: 103), this Albanian word is borrowed from Ven broca ‘kind of very small nail’. However, the Modern Greek mediation is clearly visible in the regular Modern Greek alternation between initial voiced and unvoiced stops, which is due to the amalgamation of the final -ν [-n] of the accusative of the definite article with the initial consonant of the following noun or adjective. This phenomenon results in back-formed nominatives by either voicing or devoicing due to re-segmentation. Thus Ven. broca ‘kind of very small nail’ was originally borrowed in Modern Greek as μπρόκα [‘broka] ‘nail, doornail, hobnail’, with its accusative τη μπρόκα [ti(m)‘broka] ‘the nail etc.’ being re-segmented into την πρόκα [ti(m)‘broka], which produced a new nominative η πρόκα [i‘proka] < (την) πρόκα [ti(m)‘broka] (Krimpas, 2007: 160; cf. Krimpas, 2019: 89-90).

(d) shkoq ‘to husk, to hull’ and its cognate shkoqis ‘to explain, to clarify’: The initial sh- is clearly a prefix of Latin and Romance origin meaning ‘de-, dis-, un-, ex-, completely’, the final -is is the well-studied Modern Greek deverbative suffix based on perfective stems of Modern Greek verbs (Kyriazis, 2001: 230-233; Krimpas, 2007: 115; Krimpas, 2017: 434-435), while the stem -koq-, according to Orel (1998: 190-191, 422) derives from Alb koko ‘head’, which he considered to be a non-borrowed word, and according to Meyer (2007: 251-252) is of only ultimate Greek origin via Lat coccum and *coccus. However, if one considers the phenomenon described above on bizele, it becomes obvious that the indefinite form of koqja ‘kernel, grain’ is a back-formation from its definite form koqja, which is borrowed from MGk κόκκια [‘kɔcja] ‘seeds, grains, legume seeds’, plural of κόκκι [‘kɔci], as suggested also by the [çç] that renders MGk [c], cf. also Alb koqis [koçis] ‘to pick/gather/eat (fruit etc.) piece by piece’ < MGk κοκκίαω [koçio], perfective stem of the non-standard verb κοκκίζω [koçio] ‘to de-seed’ < κόκκι [‘kɔci] (cf. Kyriazis, 2001: 395 on kokkiçoi).

(e) dhjoli [djo li] ‘violin (in folk orchestra)’, a non-standard variant of vjoli: Dashi (2013: 448) ex silentio does not recognize the Modern Greek origin of this word and its variants. Meyer (2007: 539, 137), although properly recognizing that the standard form vjoli is a Modern Greek borrowing, he missed the Modern Greek origin of dhjoli, which is obviously borrowed from non-standard MGk διολί [djo‘li] (for this word, used at least in Cephalonia, see e.g., Gasparinatos & Gasparinatou-Tzouganatou 2004: 89), as shows the change [vj] > [d], which reminds of the well-documented change [j] > [d], cf. [jo‘firi] ‘bridge’ > [djo‘firi] in Cephalonian Greek.

3.3 Unknown and native or Modern Greek? Missed lexical evidence

(a) zigur [zi‘gur] ‘male yearling lamb; young ram’: Admittedly, Morozova, Rusakov and Ovsjannikova (2020: 284) are at least honest when stating that they could not establish the etymology of zigur ‘male yearling lamb; young ram’. However, a better command of Modern Greek vocabulary would have easily led them to MGk ζιγούρι [zi‘yurı] ‘two-year old lamb’, itself derived from the adjective ζιγός [zi‘yos] ‘even’.

(b) pisplilos [pispi‘los] ‘to dress ostentatiously, to doll up’: Orel (1998: 327 s.v. pisplillohēm ‘to dress up, to smarten oneself’) thought this verb derived from pilloj [pi‘loj] ‘to hackle (flax)’ with expressive reduplication, itself from pille ‘flax comb’, in its turn from Lat. pilō ‘to comb’. However, he probably did not know the non-standard MGk πισπιλλόνω ‘to cover; to dredge’, which obviously continues Gk. ἐπισπιλλέω [epispileɔ] < ἐπί [epi] ‘on, all over’ + σπήλας [spilos] ‘spot’, lit. ‘to make spotted; to sprinkle all over’ (Krimpas, 2007: 157-158, although I had not yet verified my hypothesis about the existence of a non-standard Modern Greek verb πισπιλλόνω [pispi‘lɔnɔ], which I now know that does exist in Epirus – i.e., very close to Albania –
and elsewhere. Alb pispillos is, therefore, borrowed from πισπιλῶσ- [pispiˈtos], which is the perfective stem of πισπιλῶνο [pispiˈtono].

c) porropi (also poropi, perupi) [pоро’пи ροω’пи пeu’пи] ‘devastation; remote region’. According to Orel (1998: 339), this word and its variants are ‘deverbatives based on an unattested prefixal *perf-rip, cf. rjeap’. However, the multiple variants are not phonologically regular neither when compared to their putative origin (per cannot change into per in any known Albanian variant) nor when compared to each other (especially the [r] > [i] change is irregular). On the other hand, if one posits a dialectal MGk *απορροπιτή < *άπο(ρ)οπιτή < ἀπό ‘from, off’ + ροπή ‘inclination’, all changes are regular: elision of initial unstressed vowel (cf. Lat Aprilis > Alb Prilli and/or MGk επιθυμώ [epiθi mo] ‘to desire’ > πεθυμάω [peθi ma] ‘to miss, long for’); alternation between [r] and [i], a typical difference between diphotic and non-diphotic Modern Greek dialects (cf. Standard MGk απορρέω [apoˈreo] ‘to result from’ with its Cypriot MGk variant [apo’reo]), let alone that many Northern Greek variants have generally a more trilled [r] than Southern ones; alternation between unstressed /o/ and /u/, a typical difference between Southern and Northern Modern Greek varieties (cf. μπορώ [boˈro] ‘can, be able to’ with its Northern variant [buˈro]). Çabej (1976: 44), although correctly etymologizing rupi from Gk ροπή [o’pi] ‘inclination’ (in fact from a Northern Modern Greek variant pronounced [ru’pi]), thought that porropi and its variants were influenced by Alb pērēpēnē ‘steep slope’. However, given what has been said above, pērēpēnē [paraˈpina] may instead have been influenced by the Modern Greek words in question or be a hybrid consisting of some further variant *pērrēpī [paraˈpi] (given that centralization of vowels is very usual in Albanian, cf. MGk πουρνάρι [puˈnari] ‘kermes oak’ > Alb. pēnar [pəˈna]) and the frequent Albanian suffix -inë (itself of Slavic origin).

4. Conclusions

As the above examples clearly show, Albanian etymology is a rather complicated task, given: (a) the practically unknown early stages of this language due to its late documentation; and (b) the multiple substrate and superstrate layers that have accumulated on its core vocabulary and structure through the centuries. This means that even a small progress in Albanian etymology could be of particular importance for the reconstruction of its history. Modern Greek has had a profound lexical and morphological influence on Albanian, although less than Latin/Proto-Romance and South Slavic. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to have a good command of Ancient, Medieval and Modern Greek, especially of non-standard varieties of the latter, in order to be able to discern possible Modern Greek borrowings in Albanian. The above discussion shows that Modern Greek should be one’s first choice as possible etymological source of borrowed words that do not clearly originate in other well-documented donor languages. Non-standard varieties spoken in Epirus and the Ionian Islands are of particular importance in this connection, given that the whole Ionian-Adriatic region has always been marked by the co-existence of various linguistic groups, including Greek, Romance, Albanian, and Slavic. Generally speaking, Modern Greek borrowings in Albanian are not difficult to recognize once diachronic and diatopic evolution of Greek is mastered as solidly as possible. Their relatively recent date has not allowed for profound changes that could obscure their origin. The main reasons why the Modern Greek origin or mediation of some Albanian loanwords has been missed so far in the relevant literature lie mostly in phonological and morphological similarities among donor languages and/or defective mastery of non-standard Greek vocabulary and structure. More often than not, the Modern Greek etymology of an Albanian loanword is suggested by a combination of phonological and morphological traits. Most words with missed Modern Greek etymology are nouns and verbs, and more rarely adjectives.
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