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Original

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Publisher:

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Published

DOI:

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Some special cases of Albanian Turkisms

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Key words: Albanian, Turkisms, interference, Balkan linguistics

Abstract

In this article I take into consideration some Albanian Turkisms of particular interest, which have not been sufficiently analysed in previous studies involving this subject: *abdyselat*, *abolla*, *adobash*, *ajam-ejam*, *dert/i*, *mushmoll/ë*, *ras/ë-rast*, *rrobdisham/ë* and *sytjen/ë*.

* * *

I am working as exhaustively as possible on a research on Albanian Turkisms – to be published hopefully in the near future –. A necessary task, as Boretzky's work of 1976, though valuable, needs to be revised and duly completed. In this article I bring to scholars' notice some remarkable Turkisms taken from my research, chosen for their peculiar presence in Albanian – compared to other Balkan languages, and the outstanding interferences that they present between Turkish, Albanian and other Balkan and non-Balkan languages.

abdyselat, -i, avdeselat (m.n.) – castor-oil plant (*Ricinus communis*) : Ott. *abdüsselâtin* - *Tiglium seeds, which yield croton oil* (Redhouse 1890: 1281).

Dizdari (2005) considers *abdyselat* as a direct loanword from Ar. *habb'us sâlatin*, lit. “emperors' pill”. Škaljić (1985: 295) reports Scr. *habu-salatin*, *abu-salatin* primarily as a loanword from Tur. *habbus-salatin*, lit. “sultans' grain”. However, neither Ar. *habb'us sâlatin* nor Tur. *habbus-salatin* are to be considered as the origin of the Alb. word, as direct Arabisms mostly derive from religious literature (e.g. the Qur'an, which is unlikely in this case). Accepting the assumption that *abdyselat* derives from *habbus-salatin*, it would be hard to explain the dissimilation *bb* > *bd* in Alb., as Alb. Arabisms and Turkisms are too recent to show such phonetic mutations. Moreover, except the direct loanwords from the Qur'an, most of Arabisms

and Persisms have entered the Alb. lexicon through Tur., and especially through Ottoman Tur. This is the case of Ott. *abdüsselâtin*, which effectively confirms this thesis.

abolla (conj.) *Reg. Old* – so that, in order to.

Çabej (1976: 8-9) reports this word as Northern Ghëg dialect, used especially in Shkodër. Relating Meyer (Meyer 1891: 1) the part *-olla* contains the optative form of the third person singular of the Tur. verb *olmak* “to be, to become”, where the Tur. *olaki* “so that, in order to” is included as well, whereas *ab-* is obscure. In *abol-la*, Çabej (1976) considers the initial *a-* as a probable Alb. interrogative particle *a* of some interrogative sentences used as final clauses. He does not set aside *-bolla* from the Modern Gr. of Epirus *μπολάκι* (εἴθε, ἄμποτε = “would to God (that)...; please God (that)...; I wish to heaven (that)...; would to heaven (that)...; if only; how I wish”; ἴσως = “perhaps, probably”), which should contain the Tur. *ki* “that, in order that” in the final *-ki*. In that way, Çabej (1976) claims that Tur. *olmak*, *olaki* is the clear explanation of the Alb. and Gr. dialect word. He affirms that only the initial *b* remains unclear.

On the contrary, the *b* in *abolla* is very clear. Tur. *bolaki*, *bolayki* (which also appears as *bola ki*) “would to heaven (that)...; if only; how I wish” is well documented in Ottoman Tur., as well as in Modern Tur. dialect. Gr. *μπολάκι* is consequently a loanword from Tur. Therefore, Alb. *abolla* can be etymologized as: *a-* + *bolaki* without the final *-ki*.

adobash, -i, adobash, odobash (m.n.) – wise person (there are usually two of them) who stays close to the flag holder in a bridal procession of paranymphs (those who escort the bride to the groom’s house) and offers advice to him; a gentleman with an important name who follows the flag holder; the second person in a row of people who are involved in corn hoeing or weeding; hoer’s helper.

According to Elezi (2006: 143), who interprets a not well documented Tur. word as “first man, first gentleman”, it probably derives from Tur. *adap*, *adab* (pl. of *edeb*) “customs; regular customs and observances, rules of good manners; social conventions; accepted ways” and *-daş*, *-taş* (suffix which indicates a sharing: “colleague, mate”) or *baş* “chief”. It is more likely that it derives from Tur. *odabaşı*, *odobaş* – *chief of a chamber of servants; (his.) Janissary officer, who rules an “oda” (company) of Janissaries; person in charge of the rooms in a caravansary or inn* : Rom. *odabaşa*, *odobaşa* – *capitán* (Cioranescu 1958: 577) : Gr. *οντάμπασης* : Srbc. *oda-baša*, *odobaša* : Bul. *ода-баши*

ajam, -i, **ejam** (m.n.) – desire; inclination, disposition, tendency; propitious, favourable weather or climate; favourable condition or time (to do sth.); good for-

tune; success; soil moisture (required for plant growth); time; epoch, era; life; (Shkodër, as *ajam*) run-up; relief; vent; outburst; vigour; ardour, eagerness, fig. flame (e.g. of patriotism) : Ott. *eyyam* – (a day or season) when favorable gales and fine weather prevail (Redhouse 1890: 285); days; favourable wind : Srbc. *ejan* – wind; whirlwind; gale, windstorm (Škaljić 1985: 264).

The *ejam* variant seems to be more documented, as it appears in Boretzky (1976) (as *Zeit, Epoch, Leben*), in Leotti (1937) and in Metaj (2009). The *ajam* variant is documented by Dizdari (2005) and Elezi (2006). Dizdari describes the *ejam* “day, time” variant as “more original”. He reports as well *jamë*, -a (feminine variant, with aphaeresis) “time, soil moisture (required for plant growth)”.

dert/i (v.) – tr. to overcome a disease which is usually caught just once (e.g. measles, smallpox etc.); to have an experience which is usually related to a determinate period of life; intr. to be ill for a long time.

The verb, according to Çabej (1987), was documented for the first time in Father Pjetër Budi's "Speculum Confessionis" (1621) – and also in "Rituale Romanum" (1621), according to Demiraj (2004) – as *me derytune/me dertunë*. *Dert/i* is a later variant, as well as *dertoj*, *me (u) dertue*, refl. *dertohem* “to talk about one's troubles, complain” and *me dertë* “to be ill” < Alb. *dert*, -i (m.n.) – complaint, worry; sorrow; trouble; pain : Tur. *dert* (< Pers. *dārd*) – a chronic disease, sickness; a trouble, a sorrow, a care, a worry; complaint; a troublesome problem : Rom. *dert* : Arom. *dertă*, *derte* : Gr. *ντέρτι*, *ντερτ'* : Srbc. *dert* : Bul., Mac. *дерт*, *дерд*. The meaning similar to the Alb. verbs *dergj/em* “lie down suffering, sick” and *derdh* (< *darg-) as the first meaning of *dert/i* is probably the result of a secondary juxtaposition of the meaning of these verbs due to their assonance.

mushmoll/ë, -a, mushmullë (f.n.) – medlar, medlar-tree (*Mespilus germanica*) : Tur. *muşmula* : Rom. *moşmol*, *moşmon* – *níspero*; *moşmoală*, *moşmoană*, *moşmulă*, *muşmulă* – *níspola*, *fruto del níspero* (Cioranescu 1958: 540) : Arom. *muşmoală*, *muşmulă* – *nëfle*; *muşmuleŭ* – *néflie* (Papahagi 1963: 720) : Gr. *μούσμουλο* : Srbc. *mušmula*, *mušmulja* : Bul. *мушмула*, *мушмала* (dial.), *мушмул*, *мошмул* : Mac. *мушмула*.

There is no clear connection between the Gr. (Ancient Gr. *μέσπιλον*, Medieval Gr. *μούσπουλον*, Modern Gr. *μούσμουλο*) and the Tur. forms. As a rule, Tur. *muşmula* is considered as a derivation of *μούσμουλο*. But there are scholars (as Meyer 1893: 33) who consider the Modern Gr. *μούσμουλο* as a backborrowing from Tur. Thus, the Tur. word is identified as a derivation from the most ancient forms in Gr. Accepting this hypothesis, the *p > m* assimilation takes place in Tur., not in Gr.

There are various interpretations about formation and meaning in Alb.:

a) As a “partial” popular (or false) etymology: if *mush*, as it appears phonological-

ly, has no meaning in Standard Alb., on the other hand *moll/ë*, *-a* means “apple”.

b) As a “complete” popular etymology 1: in this case, Alb. splits semantically the Tur. word in two parts and gives to each of them a new meaning. If in Standard Alb. (which is basically Tosk) *mush* as it is written has no meaning, in spoken Gheg means “to fill, to swell (up)”, because especially Gheg tends not to pronounce the *b* in cases such as: *mbrapa-mrapa*; *mbrëmje-mramje*, *këmborë-kumonë*, *këmbë-kamë*, etc. But in Standard Alb., as well as in Tosk, it is written as *mbush*. In Cordignano (1938) we find the synonym *mollëmuçe*, *-ja* “medlar”, which can be found in Kostallari (1980) too. But there the word *muçe* is absent. It is contained in Elezi (2006) and it means “ass, donkey” (hard to say if *mollëmuçe* is related to the donkey’s ears due to the shape of its leaves) or “bundle of grass”. However, there exists an Alb. reflexive verb *muçitem* “to swell up” (Kostallari 1980: 1178), which may corroborate this thesis.

So, it seems that Tur. *muşmula* is reinterpreted in Alb. as *mushmollë* (while the variant *mushmullë* is obsolete), giving to this Turkism a meaning which is not present in Tur.: “swollen apple”, “plum, chubby apple”, which can be confirmed by the Alb. synonym *mollëmuçe* (*mollë* + *muçe*, where *muçe* is probably related to the verb *muçitem* “to swell up”). Besides, Leotti (1937) relates the variant *muçmollë*, which could corroborate this thesis. But it could also be the case of the phonetic phenomenon *sh* > *ç* (postalveolar fricative [ʃ] > affricate [tʃ]), e.g. in the variants of the following proverb: “*sa të rrosh do të mësoh*”/“*sa të rroç do (të) mësoç*” = “live and learn” and, probably, even in the verb *muçitem* < **m(b)ushitem*.

c) As a “complete” popular etymology 2: *mush* “down” (Guri i Zi, Shkodër) is documented in the Gheg dictionary of Father Nikollë Gazulli (Gazulli 1941), which corresponds to the Standard Alb. *push* (a Turkism, according to him). This leads to another possible reinterpretation of *mushmollë* as “down-covered apple, downy apple”.

ras/ë, -a (f. n.) – (grammatical) case; *Colloq.* case, occasion, circumstance; s. Alb. *rast*.

rast, -i (m. n.) – case; occasion; circumstance; accident; opportunity, chance; cause, reason : (possibly) Tur. *rast* – *straight*; *right*; *proper*; *straightforward*; *in order*; *successful* / *rast gelmek* (-e) – *to meet by chance*, *chance upon (someone)*; *to meet with*, *encounter*, *find*; *(for something unexpected) to come (one's) way*, *come to (someone)* : Arom. *araste* – occasion, moment propice (Papahagi 1963: 128) : Gr. *ράστι, ράστ'* – coincidence; chance; circumstance, occasion, event; chance meeting (Koukkidis 1960: 79).

Today, *rasë* as “case; occasion; circumstance; chance” still exists in the archaic form of the Act of Contrition (a Catholic prayer), but it usually means “grammatical case”, whereas the meaning “case, occasion” survives only in some reduced colloquial usages. Çabej (2002) considers *rasë* as identical with Tur. *rast* (but in its

variant without *-t*, such as in Tur. *rasgele*, *rastgele* “by chance, haphazard”) and, according to him, it appears for the first time in Father Jungg’s Alb.-Lat. dictionary of 1895 as *ras-a* “opportunity, chance”. According to Çabej (2002), *rasë* as “grammatical case” and “case” (e.g. *tri rasa tifoje* “three cases of typhus”; *në çdo rasë* “in any case”) supposedly derives from It. *caso*, Fr. *cas*, It./Lat. *cadere*, Ger. *Fall*. There is a reinterpretation – according to Çabej (2002), by the clergy of Shkodër in the period after Meyer and Jungg – which associates *rasë* with the Gheg inf. *me ra* “to fall”, as *caso*, *cas* are associated with *cadere* and *Fall* with *fallen*. So, according to Çabej (2002), “Bashkimi” Association’s Alb. new dictionary of 1908 is the first to contain the form *rasë* “case, occasion”.

In the Alb. variants *ças*, *çast* “moment, instant”, *bas*, *bast* “betting” (Turkism), *mes*, *mest* “middle” (adv.), *kosa*, *kosra*, *kostra* “scythe; harvest; braid of hair” and *djathë* (*i*, *e*) < *djathët/ë* (*i*, *e*) < *djathë* (*i*, *e*) “right, right-hand” (of Indo-European heritage), Çabej (1976, 1987) explains the presence of *t* mainly as a phonetic behaviour of Alb., or as a remainder of the old locative case. By excluding the variants *ras/ë*, *rast*, he does not consider the hypothesis that an earlier *ras/ë* could actually be related to the verb *me ra*, and a later *rast* could be an Alb. formation. On the other hand, it is unlikely that *rast*, as a Turkism, has conditioned the Alb. forms *ças*, *çast* (Slavism), *bas*, *bast* (Turkism), *mes*, *mest* (probably from Gr.) and *kosa*, *kostra* (the variant *kosa* has Slavic origin).

rrobdisham/ë, -a, rrobdëshamë, rrobdesham, rrobdyshamë (f.n.) – dressing gown; bathrobe : Tur. *robdöşambr*.

sytjen/ë, -a; sutjen, -i (f.; m.n.), **sutjena** (pl.) – bra, brassiere : Tur. *sütyen*, *sutyen*.

These two words are obviously Gallicisms in Tur., respectively from Fr. *robe de chambre* and *soutien-gorge*. Tur. *robdöşambr* is not documented before the Thirties. Alb. *sytjen/ë* shows its Tur. origin in a phonetic evidence: the vowel *y*. The well documented and predominant variant *sütyen*, which follows the laws of Tur. vowel harmony (the *e* of the second syllable causes the anteriorisation of the vowel of the first syllable) is directly linked to Alb. *sytjen/ë* (*y* = *ü*). *Sytjen/ë* and *sutjena* are documented only in two recent dictionaries, i.e. Oxford (1999) and Elezi (2006). Thus, even admitting that these Gallicisms were used in the spoken language before their written documentation, *rrobdishamë* and *sytjen/ë* confirm the persistence of Tur. influence on Alb. after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

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