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## Oral Histories and the Dialectal Research in Albania

The present article discusses the use of oral histories as a key methodological tool in linguistic and dialectal research in Albania, and as a crucial part of historical documentation. The article draws mainly on the empirical experience of both authors, who have performed research mainly in the Korça area, an area of complex linguistic contacts (Albanian-Slavic Macedonian-Greek). The two researchers recorded a number of oral histories in two distinct speeches; one belonging to the Tosk dialect of the Albanian language and the other belonging to the Aromanian dialect of the Romanian language. These two speeches are in danger of becoming extinct for two main reasons: the first being due to the linguistic homogenization of the Albanian dialects into the standard variant (Shkurtaç, 1999), the other being due to the cultural and linguistic assimilation of the Aromanians living in Albania (Capidan, 1943).

*Key words:* oral history, Tosk dialect, Devoll speech, Aromanian dialect, Farsherot speech.

### 1. Introduction

The present article aims to discuss the advantages and limitations of oral histories (in the form of both video recordings and interviews), as sociolinguists' main tools for linguistic and dialectal research, as well as for historians to document various historical moments in Albania. The oral histories analyzed in the article were collected between 2007 and 2010 (for the Devoll speech) and during the period 2010-2015 (for the Farsherot speech<sup>1</sup>) mainly in the Korça area, situated in South-Eastern Albania, an area of complex linguistic contacts (Albanian-Slavic, Macedonian-Greek), where the Tosk dialect of the Albanian language and its various speeches also come in contact with the Aromanian dialect, particularly with its Farsherot speech.

The geographical position of the Devoll area to the South of the Shkumbin River (which divides Albania into the two main dialectal areas; that of the Geg dialect to the North and that of the Tosk dialect to the South) includes the Devoll speech into the Tosk dialect area. This speech is spoken in the villages located on the two sides of the Devoll River, including those villages found where the river springs up on the mountain and down, up to the village of Cangonj, where it becomes a natural boundary, separating the Devoll area from the Korça area. On the one hand, this speech presents common features with the Geg dialect, particularly

<sup>1</sup> In this study the term "speech" has been used observing the corresponding terms in Albanian and Romanian dialectology: *e folme* (Albanian) i.e. *e folmja e Devollit*- the Devoll speech and *grai* (Romanian) i.e. *graiul fărșerot*- the Farsherot speech.

with some of its speeches, but it also presents special features which include it in the Eastern group of speeches belonging to the Northern Tosk sub-dialect.

Within the Northern Tosk sub-dialect there are two main speech groups: the Western and the Eastern group. Due to the geographical position of Devoll, the Devoll speech falls under the Eastern group. The territories where the Eastern speeches are spoken used to belong to the various administrative units, separated from each other. Thus, historically, the Western speeches have been spoken in the territories belonging to the Vlore and Berat Sanjaks<sup>2</sup>, whereas the Eastern speeches have been spoken in the Oher and Selasfor Sanjaks. Before the Ottoman conquest, these two groups were divided again on a territorial basis, since Vlore and Berat areas were under the domination of the Muzakas<sup>3</sup> (Hopf, 1873). The Devoll speech is very interesting from a dialectological point of view, not only because of its geographical position, but also due to the specific historical and social circumstances under which it developed, turning it into a speech with distinct features, as compared to other Tosk speeches and standard Albanian. As a borderline South-eastern speech spoken by an Albanian community living next to a Greek speaking community, this speech preserves old features of the Albanian language, especially at the phonetic level.

Two ethnographic works have dealt with the Devoll speech at all linguistic levels, being accompanied by dialectal texts and a glossary of regional words (Xhaçka, 1956 and Gjinari, 1960). In addition, there are also two works on several customs and rites of the Devoll area written by Xhaçka (1959a; 1959b), as well as a volume of folklore from Upper Devoll collected by Zdruli (1987).

The Aromanians of Albania belong to the Farsherot group (Capidan, 1931; Nevaci, 2011), speaking a dialect of the Romanian language, known as the Aromanian dialect, which, together with the Meglenoromanian and Istroromanian, form the historical dialects of the Romanian language to the South of Danube.

The Aromanian dialect is widely spread in Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, the Republic of North Macedonia and Romania, as well as other European countries. The dialect has also spread across Australia and the United States due to the immigration of the Aromanian community over the last few decades.

Based on the linguistic differences of their speeches, Aromanians have been divided into several groups or branches: the Pindens (most of them compactly concentrated in Greece, in the Pindus Mountains), Farsherots (most of whom live in Albania, having their origins in Frashër, Albania), the Gramostens (having their origins from Gramoste) and the Grabovens (from Grabova, Llënga and Niçea in Albania, near Pogradec, about 30 km from the city of Korça).

Most of the Farsherots live in Albania, though we may come across Farsherot communities today in the Republic of North Macedonia and Greece. This is due to the extraordinary mobility of the Farsherots and the nature of their nomadic lifestyle, historically. From all the Aromanians, the Farsherots are the only ones who keep their ethnic name without its prosthesis *a-*, but with an initial apical trill, *rrămän*,

<sup>2</sup> Former administrative unit during the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>3</sup> Albanian aristocratic family during the Middle Ages.

similar to the sound reproduced by the Albanian *rr* grapheme (multi-vibration apical trill). The other populations call them *Vlachs*, a term by which the Romanized populations living to the north and south of the Danube have generally been designated. Albanians call them *çobeni* (“shepherds”, so by their traditional profession) or *rëmeri* (probably from Romanus), while the Greeks call them *αρβανιτόβλαχοι* (i.e. “Vlachs from Albania”) or *καραγούνοι* (“bearers of black furs”), this latter name pointing to the traditional black sheep or goat fur these shepherds used to wear in the past. Being a population of shepherds, the Farsherots have known a wide spread in Greece too, where many of them finally settled. The case of the Aromanians is a particular one because, even though they are among the oldest ethnic groups in the Balkans, speaking a Romance idiom, they have never managed to form a state. Most of the Farsherots are settled in Albania, and live in communities spread like small islands on the map of Albania, in the southern part of the country (the area of contact with the Tosk dialect of the Albanian language), both in the mountainous or higher parts of the southeast, as well as in the western plain, Muzachia Plain (Alb. Myzeqe). Therefore, the Aromanians living in Muzachia Plain, in the districts of Vlorë, Fier, Lushnja, some of the Berat district call themselves in arom. *mizuk’ari*. Depending on their places of origin, there are other names assigned to the different groups, such as *culuňat* (from Kolonja), *jărcăňot* (from Jarcani), *uiaňit* (from Ujanik), *căstrăňot* (from Kustrec), *plisot* (from Plasa).

At present there are no exact statistics on the number of Aromanians in Albania or in the Korça area. According to the information obtained from the Aromanian associations in Albania, their number would be roughly 200.000, with between 4.000 and 5.000 being in the Korça area. Our investigations show that a large number of Aromanians living in the city of Korça today have their origins in the old Aromanian centers Moscopole (Alb. Voskopojë) and Şipsca (Alb. Shpiskë). They are considered to be old town dwellers, and their homes are generally located in districts 1 and 2 at the very heart of the city, the historical area of Korça. In the last 20 years, a new district appeared, inhabited mostly by Aromanians, whose places of origin are Plasa and Mborie (the latter being located just a few kilometers from Korça city and practically joining it). In addition, our interviews show that some of the neighboring villages (Mborja, Drenova, Boboshtica, Bellovoda, and Voskopojë) were populated by Aromanians after 1945, when they were forced to settle down under the Communist regime.

During the Communist regime and its subsequent fall in 1991, the Aromanians of Albania did not enjoy the status of “national minority”, because, according to the Albanian state, they lacked “a motherland”, or, to use another term, “a kin-state”. Officially, the Aromanians and Romas had the status of “ethnic-linguistic minorities”, which neither de facto, nor de iure granted any language rights to these communities. Officially, this situation has come to an end with the entering into force of Law 96/2017, where 9 national minorities are recognized today in Albania: Greek, Macedonian, Aromanian, Roma, Egyptian, Montenegrin, Bosnian, Serb and Bulgarian.

### 1.1 The Use of Movies for Dialectal Studies

Albanian art films are a very good source for dialectal studies too. The film history in Albania begins relatively late, but their production from 1953, with the Soviet-Albanian joint productions, until the 1990s had been abundant. It is worth mentioning that the Albanian films of the period 1958-1980 focused largely on topics of war, historical themes, topics dealing with rebuilding the country and changing the mentality under the new Communist ideology. As a result, films were made with a large cast of actors where the community was on focus, not the individual, the action, and not the psychological analysis. In the films of this period, a large group of amateur actors were involved, actors who maintained the essential characteristics of their dialect, whereas the professional actors adjusted their speech to the dialect, depending on the film theme.

The Korça region played an important role in both broadcasting and providing actors. Many of the films of this period were made in Korça and the surrounding areas because they presented a distinct mentality from the Albanian mentality as a whole. Moreover, Korça has had a rich theater tradition, enabling more qualified actors and directors.

Devoll's speech is decisive in the characters of some of the films, such as "The First Years" (1965), "The Eighth in Bronze" (1970), "The Stars of the Long Nights" (1972), "The Confrontation" (1976). Meanwhile, Korça and the surrounding areas are represented in a large number of films (apart from those we mentioned), such as "The Emperor's Bed" (1973), "Beni Walks by Himself" (1975), "The Narrow Streets Looking for the Sun" (1976), "The Last Winter" (1976), "The Lady of the City" (1976), "The Man with a Canon" (1977), "A Friend from the Village" (1980) (Qezari et al.: 2004)<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

During their field research, often accompanied by their students, the two experienced researchers managed to record an important number of oral histories (approximately 5 hours each) in various speeches of the Tosk and Aromanian dialects, speeches which are in danger of becoming extinct because of the latest linguistic homogenization of the Albanian dialects into the standard variant (Shkurtaj, 1999), on the one hand and due to the cultural and linguistic assimilation of the Aromanians living in Albania, on the other hand (Capidan, 1943). More than that, the oral histories collected represent two important databases not only for linguistic and dialectal research in this particular geographic area of Albania, but they may become valuable data for historians and social scientists since they focus on particu-

<sup>4</sup> "Vitet e para" (1965), "I teti në bronz" (1970), "Yjet e netëve të gjata" (1972), "Përballimi" (1976), "Krevati i perandorit" (1973), "Beni ecën vetë" (1975), "Rrugicat që kërkonin diell" (1976), "Dimri i fundit" (1976), "Zonja nga qyteti" (1976), "Njeriu me top" (1977), "Një shoqe nga fshati" (1980).

lar events from the history of Albania, such as the creation of the Albanian modern state, the Second World War and the liberation from the Germans, the instauration of the Communist regime in Albania and its consequences, the transition from the traditional nomadic lifestyle to the sedentary one within the borders of the Albanian state of the Aromanians during the Communist regime etc. By focusing on the speakers' unique life experiences, these oral histories become an opportunity for all these recorded people who have been "hidden from history" to have their voices heard.

Finally, oral histories are looked upon as narratives, which according to many authors (Schiffirin, 1996; De Fina, 2003, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2007) represent an important locus for the articulation of identities because they give the tellers the opportunity to present themselves as actors in social worlds, while at the same time negotiating their present self with other interactants.

The dialectal texts for the Devoll speech have been collected in 22 dialectal points. Some texts were recorded by means of a dictaphone, others by video camera. The questionnaire used for the interviews was the one compiled by S. Floqi in 1971. This questionnaire continued and extended the one compiled by Çabej and Domi in 1953 (containing 63 questions in all, 20 about phonetics, 30 about morphology and syntax and 13 general ones about lexicology) since it contained 304 questions in all, 74 about phonetics, 54 about morphology, 20 about syntax and 60 about lexicology. Relying on the guidance offered by the cited questionnaire, the informants were pre-selected according to their ability to speak clearly and to tell stories at a good capacity (Floqi, 1971: 377) In addition, extra parameters taken into account were whether the informant had his/her origins in the village where the interview was conducted; if the informant had different origins, it was important to know how long he/she had been living there. The transcription of the texts was done by means of the IPA system using diacritical signs for various characteristics of the sounds.

The texts used for the Aromanian dialect have been collected through interviews conducted in Korça area, which includes Korça city and several neighboring villages, such as Voskopojë, Shpëskë, Mborje, Drenova, Boboshtica, Bellovoda, Plasa. The number of the informants was 60, males and females, in a balanced number, of various ages and having various educational levels. The informants belonging to the age group 60 to 80 were retired; most of them used to work on farms especially during the Communist regime, playing various professional roles within the agricultural cooperatives of production. Before the instauration of this regime in Albania, the Aromanian informants belonging to this age group used to have a largely nomadic lifestyle, characterized by transhumance (i.e. in summertime they used to live high up in the mountains, where they were leading their flocks of sheep, and in winter they used to lead them near the sea, where they built shelters for them), many of them having no formal education or only the basic level (the primary school). The other groups identified were adults aged 30 to 50, professionally active, having graduated high school or university, working in the public or private sector, and children

aged 7 to 15, all attending public schools where standard Albanian, quite similar to the Tosk dialect, is the main language of instruction.

The questionnaire contained several open questions, whose topics depended on the informant's age, asking him/her to describe old professions, traditions and customs (e.g. how they used to organize baptisms, engagements, weddings, funerals or how they used to make bread, cheese, wool etc.) and several open questions requiring them to describe more contemporary professions and preoccupations (e.g. a visit to the doctor/dentist, at the supermarket, travelling abroad, a day at school/university etc.).

## 2.2 Goals

The recordings for the Devoll speech contain speech samples from informants of various ages too. Due to the special features of the speech, most of the informants belong to the ages of 60 to 80, as they have generally preserved the old features of the dialect, particularly the informants living in the villages from the Upper Devoll area. These villages are mainly inhabited by Christian orthodox communities, whose members have massively immigrated to the USA. The other informants, belonging to the age groups 40 to 60 or 5 to 15 and 16 to 30 were recorded in order to measure the influence of the following sociolinguistic factors over the dialect and consequently over the speech:

1. the massive influence of the standard Albanian due to the obligatory education in standard Albanian (especially from 1971 till 1990);
2. the Code-switching phenomena due to the immigration before 1945, mainly in the USA, and after the 1990s in Greece and the USA.

Our method of research combines the sociolinguistic interview with the ethnographic qualitative research and discourse analysis, focusing mainly on *indexicality* (especially linguistic – e.g. sounds, accents, words, expressions that may be associated with aspects of the larger context when they evoke specific traits, ideas, activities and properties that may be seen as typical of certain social identities), *local occasioning* (i.e. identity seen as a communicative process taking place within concrete social contexts and practices, paying attention to details of local talk in order to understand how identities are brought about and negotiated), *positioning* as relational processes (i.e. identity seen as a socially grounded process that involves a continuous confrontation of the self with others; cfr. Wilson, 1990; De Fina, 1995 and Van Dijk, 2010).

## 2.3 Phonetic Transcription

An important part of each research has been the transcription of the interviews, partly recorded by video camera and partly by dictaphones. For the Tosk dialect, the system of transcription used was IPA, following the tradition of the Albanian dialectological school which started in the 1950's, also present in *The Dialectological Atlas of the Albanian Language* (Volume I, II, 2007, 2008). For the Aromanian dialect, the system was the one used by the Romanian school of linguistics and



dialectology, particularly by the *Romanian Linguistic Atlas* taken over, with a few additions, from the collaborators to the *New Romanian Linguistic Atlas by Regions* and to the Romanian Phonogrammic Archive. In the latter case, many symbols are accompanied by diacritical signs in order to reflect specific characteristics of certain vowels (degree of openness, centrality, intensity, length etc.) and consonants (palatalization, nasality etc.), which unfortunately could not be transferred into ELAN, the linguistic annotator, which the researcher attempted to use in order to further analyze the linguistic corpora collected, especially quantitatively. The transcription of diphthongs, whose presence was massive and specific for both speeches, remained a challenge in both cases.

### 2.3.1 Phonetic Transcription of Devoll Speech

The oral histories in the Devoll speech were mainly recorded by dictaphone using the questionnaire compiled by Floqi (1971), whereas the others were video recorded. The transcription of the oral histories were based on the IPA system (See *Appendix I*), but the researcher experienced difficulties transcribing them since this was done by ear and not using a special computer program. Nevertheless, the phonetic transcription system used for the consonants has been adapted to the graphic system of Albanian, similarly to the one used by S. Floqi: e.g. <sh> for [ʃ], <ll> for [ɬ] (Floqi, 1971: 381-382), and not according to the IPA system).

One of the challenges was the transcription in the case of the affrication of the post dental [t] after the post-alveolar [ʃ]: in IPA system there is no special sign for the transcription of the affricated post-dental [t]. The solution found at that moment was the use of the symbol for the affricate <ç>, regardless of the degree of the affrication (**shçatë** “seven”, **shçizë** “spear”, **shçytke** “diaper”, **shçjere** “pour”, **jashçë** “out”).

Regarding the vowels’ system of the Devoll speech, it does not contain diacritical signs because the vowels do not have the characteristics of nasality or length.

The most problematic transcription was that of the vowel [ə] which is more closed towards [e] (so [ə]). The corresponding vowel in the other speeches of the Tosk dialect is <â> placed before one of the nasal consonants [m], [n], [nj]: E.g. **shkëmp** “rock”, **dhëmp** “tooth”, **dhëntret** “groom”, **i mëngjër** “left”.

Xhaçka emphasizes that: “... here too, like all over the Tosk dialect, we have the stressed [ə] in those positions where in the Geg dialect there is [â]” (Xhaçka, 1956: 108). This [â] before nasal consonants has been replaced by [ə] only in some Turkish words such as: **musëndër** “a kind of wardrobe”, **nallëne** “sabot”, but in other Turkish words it has remained unchanged: e.g. **ashllama** (a kind of food), **Osman**, **Hasan** (proper names), **aksham** “evening”, **amamçe** “Turkish bath”, **ajvan** “donkey” etc. According to Gjinari, in the speech of the old Devoll inhabitants, this [ə] is pronounced more backwards and more rounded than in the speeches of Berat, Skrapar, Myzeqe and Mallakstra (Gjinari, 1960: 105). However, we may add that today, even though it is pronounced as a mid vowel in words such as **këngë** “song”, **këmbë** “leg”, **dhëmb** “tooth” etc., this vowel is pronounced slightly more frontal than in other speeches, which makes it closer to [e]. In the speeches of Labëria and Çamëria (two other sub-dialects of Tosk) vowel [ə] is clear in every position.

Another challenge was the transcription of the diphthongs in various positions in the words:

- diphthong *ɥa* – its transcription by means of the diacritical sign of the non-syllabic *ɥ*; *Jorgɥa*, *u martɥa* “was married”, *u çpɥa* “was pierced”, *kuriskɥa* “hump-back”, *u ndrɥa* “got dressed”, *u lëçɥa* “rushed on”.
- diphthong *ɥe*- may be found in any position in a word, *lërɥer* “got dirty”, (*me*) *të pɥeturë* “asked”, *rëfɥerë* “told”, *rëmbyerë* “grabbed”. It is worth emphasizing that in this diphthong, in certain positions, the closed vowel [y], loses its initial element and reduces to [e]: *janë ktherë-janë kthyer* “have returned”, *ndë kre-në krye* “in front”, *më ka rëmberë-më ka rrëmbyer* “has grabbed me”. In some cases, this diphthong appears as a result of a more frontal labialization of the vowel [u], which changes it into [y] because of the presence of the alveolar-palatal consonants in front of it: *mblës>lues>lyes* (in standard Albanian *mblës* “matchmaker”) (Gjinari, 1960: 105), *Shuec>Shyec* (Shuec- official name of a Devoll village).

Furthermore, the diphthong may decompose, not because the constituent vowels may be divided into different syllables, but because in their middle the consonant [v] may insert itself, a phonetic phenomenon which is against the hiatus, like in the case of the toponym *Shyec-Shyvec*. Researching the dialectal material collected in the villages Vishocicë, Hoçisht, Ziçisht, Vërlen, we have come across the form *byěj* (the plural form of the noun *buall* “buffalo”), pronounced with a diphthong. The change of the diphthong [ɥa] into [yé] has taken a grammatical value by means of the metaphony and this is an old plural form (Çabej, 1958).

### 2.3.2 Phonetic Transcription of Aromanian Speech

For the Farsherot speech of the Aromanian dialect, the system was the one used by the Romanian school of linguistics and dialectology, particularly by the *Romanian Linguistic Atlas* taken over, with a few additions, from the collaborators to the *New Romanian Linguistic Atlas by Regions* and to the Romanian Phonogrammic Archive.

Many symbols are accompanied by diacritical signs in order to reflect specific characteristics of certain vowels (degree of openness, centrality, intensity, length etc.) and consonants (palatalization, nasality etc.), which unfortunately could not be transferred into ELAN, the linguistic annotator designed by the Max Planck Institute for linguistic research, which the researcher attempted to use in order to further analyze the linguistic corpora collected, especially quantitatively (See *Appendix 3*).

## 3. Indexicality

The following sub-chapter will demonstrate that certain phonetic traits and styles of speaking in the case of the Albanians living in Devoll area and Aromanians from Korça become symbolically associated with complex systems of meaning such as ideologies, social representations about group membership, social roles and attributes, presuppositions about aspects of social reality, individual and collective stances, practices and organization structures.



From the collected material, it appears that in the case of the Aromanians living in the Korça area, the frequency of pronouncing the apical *r* with several vibrations is more frequent with men, who, according to Capidan (Capidan, 1943: 78-79), have lost their uvular *r*, due to their social mobility, to their bilingualism or even tri-lingualism. Uvular *r* appears only in the speech of the Aromanian women, especially from rural areas, a sound which changes the usual sound of the nearby vowels. Uvular *r* is considered to have been uttered by all speakers in the past (Capidan, 1931: 124), regardless of their gender, but it has been preserved only by women because they were not socially mobile like men, usually being confined to their households and villages where they were living and raising their children or grandchildren to whom they were teaching the “authentic” mother tongue. This was also confirmed by our interviews, since all the ten women, with ages between 60 and 80, interviewed in the villages of Voskopojë, Shpëskë, Plasa, Drenova, Mborja, as well as in Korça city (who had lived most of their lives in villages and later had moved to the city) presented the uvular *r*. In the case of women informants whose ages were between 30 and 50, only the ones living in villages did present this phonetic feature, whereas the others, living in Korça city, had lost it.

In the case of the old Albanian informants of Devoll (60-80 years old), an important phonetic characteristic is the preservation of the consonant groups [kl], [gl], as in *klishë* (>kishë “church”), *glu* (>gju “knee”), present in the old Albanian and today in the Arbëresh speeches of Greece and Italy (Çabej, 1958; Çabej, 1969; Topalli, 2007). These groups have undergone palatalization, evolving today to the sounds represented by the graphemes <q> and <gj> in standard Albanian. In connection to these consonant groups, J. Gjinari (1960), based on the dialectal material collected by V. Xhaçka (1959), states that they appear only in the speech of the old speakers (60-80 years old) of Christian religion from the villages of Upper Devoll. This conclusion is also endorsed by the old toponymy of the area, existing even in Devoll villages inhabited by Muslim population today, such as *Varet e Klishës* (“The Graves of the Church”) in Bitinckë, *Klishka* (“The Church”, a place where there used to be a church) in Kurilë, Eçmenik, *Lisi i madh de Klisha* (“The Big Oak Tree of the Church”, a place where there used to be an oak tree, 150 years old) in Stropan. Thus, these speakers, of Christian religion and living mainly in Upper Devoll area, are considered to be the only ones left still preserving this feature of the Devoll speech, while the oral histories of the other age groups present more phonetic characteristics of the standard variant.

The transformation of the consonant groups [kl] and [gl], into <q> and <gj>, respectively, has already come to an end. What is interesting is that this evolution has not taken place step by step like in the case of some Geg speeches: e.g. *kl*>*kj*, *gl*>*gi* (*kian* “cry”, *giuri* “knee”) (Çabej, 1977: 107). If in three Northern sub-dialects these consonant groups have evolved, this has not happened in the speeches of Çamëri, of several villages in Korce (Dardha, Sinica, Qyteza etc.), as well as in the speeches of the old Arberesh communities settled in Greece, Ukraine and partly in the speeches of the Arberesh of Italy (Topalli, 2007: 267). Gjinari highlights the fact that the old

people from Sinica (a village in Upper Devoll, inhabited mainly by Christians) have changed the pronunciation of these consonant groups on purpose so that they may not be discriminated from the territorial community whose members they were part of (Gjinari, 1960: 110). However, since these consonant groups have appeared till recently on the linguistic map of this area, this is a clear proof of linguistic conservation. Furthermore, the preservation of [kl] group was present in the words where it finally changed into the velar [k] and not into the palatal [ç]: e.g. *klisha* > *kisha* “church”; *klyçi* > *kyçi* “wrist”; *klinda* > *kinda* “crinkle”. More than that, the groups [kl] and [gl] have been preserved in the late borrowings, which entered the dialect and the speech after the transformation of these consonant groups, like in the Latin borrowing *glasë* “bird droppings” (< Lat. \*galliata), or Slavic borrowing *kleçkë* “splinter, piece of wood” (< Sl. \*kléčka), or in several toponyms like Kokogllavë (the name of a mountain). This phenomenon has been observed in 7 informants from Upper Devoll villages, over 70 years old. Nowadays it is almost impossible to find informants who use these consonant groups.

#### 4. *Local occasioning*

At the lexical level, our analysis has dealt mainly with the borrowings and code-switching phenomena, using several linguistic criteria (i.e. frequency, adaptation and attestation in dictionaries), so that we may conclude on the degree of influence of the Tosk dialect over the Aromanian one, on the one hand, and of the standard Albanian on the Devoll speech, on the other hand. In addition, we have taken into account the gender, age, education level of the Albanian and Aromanian informants in order to see whether there are variations in this respect too. In the case of Aromanian, the inserted language is Albanian (i.e. the Tosk dialect spoken in South-Eastern Albania) and the analysis is limited to the dialect spoken by the Aromanians from the Korça area, who live together with the Albanian majority. They are predominantly bilingual, using Aromanian mostly at home, in the family environment and within the community, and Albanian, both in the community and for official communication. Younger generations tend to abandon their mother tongue and use Albanian in verbal interactions both within the family and the Aromanian community, motivated by the strong influence of the Albanian language on the Aromanian children and youths during the schooling process.

In the case of the informants aged 60-80, we have analyzed, at lexical and syntactical levels, the borrowings and code-switching phenomena in their communication, which highlighted their dynamic and fluid identity under specific political, social and economic circumstances in the history of Albania. If before Communism, most of them were *păstori* “shepherds” (< Lat. *pastor*, *-is*) or *çobenj* (< Turkish *çoban*) leading their sheep to better pastures in the mountains, during the Communist regime most of them gave up on their traditional profession and started working on farms, playing various professional roles within the agricultural cooperatives of production, and enjoying the status of pensioners later on in their lives: *magazinër*

“warehouseman” (<Alb. *magaziner*), *mecanic* “mechanic” (<Alb. *mekanik*), *krúe-veterinér* “chief vet” (<Alb. *kryeveteriner*), *pensioníšti* “pensioners” (<Alb. *pensionistë*).

As previously stated, we have analyzed the borrowings into Aromanian from the Albanian language, based on Carol Meyers-Scotton’s classification (Meyers-Scotton, 2005: 215). In the category of cultural borrowings, we have included words, which at the semantic level, designate new notions, either abstract or concrete. Cultural borrowings appear as a necessity, especially in the case of the rural communities of Aromanians, which began to come in contact with the new realities of the Albanian state once they have shifted from the nomadic life to the sedentary one and once they were integrated within the Albanian state borders after WWII.

Over time, the Aromanian speakers have been faced with the need to enrich their mother tongue with new lexical items, and sometimes replace older terms with newer ones because of the latter’s superior functionality. This is why they have been labeled as core borrowings. The biggest number of core borrowings belong again to the semantic field of professions and social categories, some of them pointing to the more recent professional categories and social roles Aromanian have taken over in the new social context: e.g. *măsús* “teacher” (<Alb. *mësues*) used instead of *dháscalu*, *príft* “priest” (<Alb. *prift*) used instead the Aromanian *préftu*, *pasonári* “wealthy” (<Alb. *të pasur*), instead of *avúti*, *besimtári* “believers” (<Alb. *besimtarë*) instead of *pistipsít/pistiméni*, *mbrétárlu* “the king” (<Alb. *mbretri*) used instead of *amirálu*, *crúsci* “inlaws” (<Alb. *krushq*) instead of *cuscri*. Informants between 7 and 15 years old, as well as those between 30 and 50, males and females, both from rural and urban areas, made use of core borrowings up to 80%, whereas those with ages between 60 and 80, only up to 20%.

As in the case of morphologically and syntactically less integrated borrowings, sentence-level code-switches point to moments in communication when bilingual speakers switch from one code to another. They activate one idiom or another according to the identity they assume or the point of view they adopt when reporting (Albanian citizen or playing various professional roles within the Communist farming systems- such as vets, animals’ caretakers, storekeepers, supervisors etc.). Thus, we have distinguished three types of thematic specialized texts in which the change of code acts as a mark of the change of perspective or the role that the individual assumes during the narrative: texts dealing with the story of a day at school, texts that include a visit to a physician, texts in which subjects describe professional activities from the past or present. Often the latter texts describe a modern, specialized profession where, besides the cultural loans needed to designate the new realities, there are also many cases of code switching at a lexical level.

Analyzing these examples, we may conclude that borrowings, either cultural or core, appear with all speakers regardless of age and gender. This demonstrates the strong influence of standard Albanian over the Aromanian dialect. Thus, with the male speakers, with a low level of formal education (usually just primary school), who have been professionally active, the rate of cultural borrowings is about 50% higher than in the case of the female speakers having the same level of education, but

who have played the role of housewives all their lives. More than that, phenomena of code switching are quite frequent with these male informants, especially when they are narrating the professional roles they held during the Communist regime (in all oral histories narrated by male informants there are frequent code-switching phenomena both at lexical and syntactical level). Interestingly enough, code switching phenomena have been observed in the case of women aged between 60 and 75, a sign that certain verbal practices act constantly and impose themselves as preferred variants in certain contexts (e.g. when they want to communicate something personal to their husbands and are afraid of being overheard by people around).

Men and women aged between 30 and 50 living in towns, with a higher degree of education (high school or university) and having an active professional life very frequently resort to code switching (all our informants included in this category used code-switching at least twice at a sentence level). The same can be observed with children aged 7 to 15 who study in public schools only in the Albanian language, regardless of the environment, rural or urban. Generally, Aromanian children or youths living in urban areas tend to abandon their mother tongue because they are afraid of being discriminated by their Albanian colleagues and friends. According to our adult informants living in urban areas, their children were still active speakers of Aromanian when the latter's grandparents were still alive.

### 5. Positioning

Within all age groups we have identified the phenomena of positioning themselves in relation to the others: for example, the Aromanians, as a cultural and linguistic minority in opposition to Albanian majority speaking the prestige language. Here we find interesting the distinction made by the inhabitants of Albanian origin from Korça regarding the Aromanian community living here. Thus, they divide the Aromanians into two categories: *çobenj fushe* (in lit. translation “shepherds i.e. Aromanians from the plain”) and *çobenj mali* (“shepherds i.e. Aromanians from the mountains”). By *çobenj fushe*, Albanians generally designate the old Aromanian inhabitants of Moscopole or Shipska, who had settled down in Korça centuries ago and had adapted themselves to the urban lifestyle, thus forming a kind of bourgeoisie before the Communist regime. *Çobenj mali* Albanians designate the Aromanians living in the communes and villages around Korça (Mborja, Drenova, Boboștița etc.) or those Aromanians who settled down relatively late in the city of Korça or, in a more general sense, those who have become sedentary late. However, about 70% of the Aromanians interviewed, with ages between 30 and 80, males and females, disagreed with this distinction, claiming that *çobenj fushe* designated the Aromanians, having their origins in Myzeqe Plain (in Albanian *fushë* meaning “plain”), and came to settle down in Korça area.

Furthermore, in relation to the Communist regime, in their oral histories, certain Aromanian informants place themselves in total opposition, for various reasons: first of all because they used to be rich (*pasonári* <Alb. *të pasur*) and the

Communist regime confiscated all their wealth (which included not only all their money, usually gold coins, Ar. *flurí*, but also their animals, their flocks of sheep, Ar. *tutípta*, the source of their income and the basis of their lifestyle); secondly because by establishing the separating state borders and banning travel abroad, the Albanian Communist regime separated them from other members of their family (including mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters etc.) who remained or were forced to remain on the other side of the border (e.g. the one dividing the Albanian state from the Greek state). There are some impressive stories in which they confess being reunited with all the members of their family after many years, when the Communist regime in Albania came to an end. This was the case of two old couples (with ages over 70) interviewed in Voskopojë.

Most of the villages in Upper Devoll are inhabited by Christians. Nevertheless, Sinica is the only village with religiously mixed population, whereas Arrza, located near the Christian villages, is entirely inhabited by Muslim population. We need to emphasize that the old inhabitants of Arrza, in their oral histories, use to say that they are cousins of Dardha and Sinica inhabitants (i.e. they used to be Christians too in the past). As far as the old Albanian inhabitants of Devoll, of Christian religion, living in Upper Devoll, are concerned, they usually define themselves in opposition to the Albanian inhabitants of Muslim religion living in Lower Devoll, whose speech does not contain some of the characteristics of the old Albanian language.

## 6. Conclusions

We have highlighted the advantages of using oral history recordings in order to illustrate regional dialects and speeches. Oral histories give us the possibility of mapping changes in dialects through time by comparing older and younger voices from the same area, as well as complex systems of meaning such as ideologies, social representations about group membership, social roles and attributes, presuppositions about all aspects of social reality, individual and collective stances, practices and organization structures. In sociolinguistics the primary focus for analysis is the original speech and thus accurate and consistent methods of transcription are necessary.

In the dialectological research, the creation of the digital archives for speeches is also very important, in order to highlight specific phonetic traits, as well as to preserve samples of speeches in danger of becoming extinct, as part of our cultural heritage.

As far as the transcription system is concerned, the adaptation of the transcription system for the Albanian oral texts is imperative: the IPA system is more useful since it allows us to use diacritical signs for various characteristics of the sounds.

Finally, the use of special computer programs may help only after a well established knowledge of the phonological system has been defined. Consequently, the use of a software may be helpful as part of a “computer-assisted transcription” procedure.

In the case of the Aromanian dialect, there is a stringent need for the unification of the transcription systems used in written media not only from Albania, but also from Bulgaria, Republic of North Macedonia etc.

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### Appendix 1

#### Dialectal text from Upper Devoll

##### Transcription with Albanian Alphabet

e me çupë ce pe të Rënjave je tinë// dhe unë ngaj Bradvica jam// jam martuarë ktu  
 Vërlen// u arrova// më e voglë se kto çupat isha/// atere martoshim çpejt// kam  
 xbritur nuse këtunë që para luftës// aterë/ kur martoshim/ vishmin xibunë/ unë kisha  
 xibunë e mamasë// bë tërë anët me klinda/// kur jam martuarë këtu dë fshat kishte  
 shumë të krishterë// tani kemi mbetur pak/// tërë kanë ikur dë Greqit// ja katrë shpi  
 kemi mbetur// dhe bë shpit time bënim poçe/// tani ktu dë Vërlen ëshçë vetëm një  
 djalë që bën// po z'di shumë si ata të qëmoçmit// e kush i mer tashinë// blenë ngaj  
 këto plastiket për kollajxhe ce z'dinë që bulmeti ëshçë më mirë dë poçet e baltit///

(Androniqi Pine, 91 vjeç, e krishterë, pa arsim, lindur në Bradvicë, martuar në Vërlen)

##### Transcription with IPA

e me tʃupə tʃe pe tə rənjave je tinə// ðe unə ngaj bradvica jam// jam martuarə ktu  
 vərən// u arova// mə e voglə se kto tʃupət iʃa/// atere martošim tʃpejt// kam dʒbritur  
 nuse kətunə cə para luftəs// aterə/ kur martošim/ viʃmin dʒibunə/ unə kiʃa dʒibunə  
 e mamasə// bə tərə anət me klinda/// kur jam martuarə kətu də fʃat kiʃte ʃumə tə  
 kriʃterə// tani kemi mbetur pak/// tərə kanə ikur də greçit// ja katrə ʃpi kemi mbe-  
 tur// ðe bə ʃpit time bənim poʃtʃe/// tani ktu də vərən əʃtʃə vetəm nə djalə cə bən//  
 po zdi ʃumə si ata tə cəmoʃmit// e kuʃ i mer taʃinə// blenə ngaj kəto plastiket pər  
 kołajçə ce zdinə cə bulmeti əʃtʃə mə mirə də poʃtjet e baltit///

[Hey girl, from Rënja's family are you// I'm from Bradvica too// I'm married here, in Vërlen// I was younger than these girls///back then we used to marry very young// I came down here as bride before the war// when we got married we used to wear xibun (a kind of wool manteaux with embroidery)// I had my mom's xibun// it was all over the sides with crinkles/// when I got married, there were many Christians here in this village//now we are few/// they have all fled to Greece// we are only four families left// we have made pots in my house too/// now it's only a guy that makes them (pots)// but he doesn't know how to make them as well as our ancestors// eh, who is taking (buying) them now// it's easier for all to buy these plastics but they don't know that dairy is better in clay pots///]

(Androniqi Pine, 91 old, Christian, without formal education, born in Bradvicë, married in Vërlen)

### Appendix 2

Dialectal text in Farsherot Speech from Korça

noḯ čilimánij ɽe-avémũ cpăscútă cu papũ ɽ-cu dădă ɽ-avémũ grítă límba / límba nõstpă di cãndũ apámũ čilimán / di cãndũ adukímũ ɽi zbupámũ / ɽ-míni ɽ-amũ zbupătă cã míni avjámũ pápu acăsă / avjámũ ɽi pãpínɽy / ma avjámũ ɽ-pápu / ɽ-cu pápu detürimíɽi u zbupám vláhica / ose rãmănêɽte ɽi cumũ đăɽémũ noḯ rãmání / ɽă ɽ-nafõpă cãndũ zbupámũ nafõpă noḯ avjámũ únă thécsi [nuc e di si iõnă] avjámũ únă thécsi áltă cu límba / cu límba ɽi zbupám ɽ / apvanică/ ɽn n-adukámũ / ɽn míni di fuméya nõstpă / míni mĩ-adukéstũ ma múttă di thécsi / thécsi áli ... áli [k] alũ zbõpopũ / ɽn ɽ-avémũ zbupătă múttă límba / ɽ-míni nu ɽ-amũ agnrɽétă ɽ-nu põti sũ-agnrɽéstũ túttă bána / ɽ-fičõpu a neḯ cãndũ apă ma nícu avjá dădă ɽ-papũ ɽ-cu pãpínɽy a neḯ zbupă multũ ģíni / ma dicăpa eyi mupípa fičõpu nu u zbupă / ɽ-avjá ca ... ca cu sicléti s-u zbupă / vétăm zbură nafõpă cu sõtãl' / d-apõja u-nviḯă italiɽti / nviḯă angliɽti / nviḯă frãngiɽti / ɽ-nu cã nu ɽ-adukéɽti / ɽ-adukéɽti multũ búnă / ɽ-ári zbõpă ɽi li đăɽti multũ búni / ma cãndũ apă nícu zbupă multũ ... multũ búnă/ u zbupă ca míni / tõpa nu u zbupăɽte / ɽ-noḯ tõpa cãndũ avjámũ pãpínɽăyi /apámũ ca detürit ta s-u zbupámũ mult búnă límba / tõpa ɽ-avémũ ałásătă nihámă / cu túttă aḯă límba ɽi-i nviḯătă di cu nícu nu s-agnrɽéɽti puté // tõpa sã spunũ ti lucpũ / míni estũ măptătă / amũ un fičõpu / tõpa s-fáti di ɽínɽiḯ ań / bãpbátu ésti mecanícũ / ári lucpătă la únă fabrică ɽi fátiă pãppõđ / di căpa s-fétiḯă d-apõja privatizími / noḯ avémũ luătă dáu-tpe makíni / ɽ-avémũ zdăfáptă un lucpũ đe-anõstũ / lucpámũ dól'i: bãpbátu ɽ-míni / elũ lucpăđă ɽ-dipũ la aḯéli mecaníkili cã míni nu li ɽti ahántũ ma ɽu-aĝútu ɽ-míni / avémũ zdăfáptũ aístũ lucpũ / avémũ vãpă đăti ań ɽi lucpámũ / ɽ-hímũ ģíni / avémũ sculătă nihámũ di iconomií / ɽ-ɽi sã-t đăcu alttiḯă //

[we who grew up with our grandparents/ we have spoken our mother tongue since we were kids/ I have spoken it too because I grew up with my grandpa at home/ I had my parents too/but I also had my grandpa/ to whom I obligatorily spoke in

our idiom or Rumanian, as we, the Rumanians, call it/and outside, when we were speaking outside, we had a certain accent [Alb. I don't know how we call it]/ we had a different accent from the Albanians/ so we were different/and in my family I have a different accent/ when I speak/ and we all have spoken our mother tongue/ and I haven't forgotten it/ and I am not going to ever forget it as long as I live/ my son, when he was a child, grew up with his grandparents and he used to speak with them a lot/but when they died, he stopped speaking/he started having ... difficulties, speaking his mother tongue/ he used to speak it only outside with his friends/ and later he learnt Italian/English/French/ now he understands it very well/and even speaks some words/ but when he was a child / he used to speak it very well/ just like me/now he doesn't speak it anymore/when we had our grandparents/ we were somewhat forced to speak it well/ now we have abandoned it a little bit/ Nevertheless the language you have learned since you were children can never be forgotten/ now let me tell you about my work/ I am married/ I have a son/ now he turns twenty and/ my husband is a mechanic/ he used to work in a factory which made socks/ after that it was privatized/ we have bought 2-3 machines/ and we have started our own business/ we work together now/ my husband and I / he takes care of the mechanical things I don't know anything about/ but I help him/we have been running this business for ten years now/ and we are doing well/ we have made some savings/ what else can I say...]

### *Appendix 3*

#### Transcription System for the Farsherot Speech of the Aromanian Dialect of the Romanian language

- a = the most open vowel from the central series (a – ă – î)
- ă = open-mid vowel from the central series (a – ă – î)
- ǎ = open ă (between ă and a)
- â = vowel from the central series, between ă and î, closer to î
- b = voiced bilabial plosive
- c = voiceless velar plosive
- ç = soft voiceless post-alveolar affricate
- d = voiced dental plosive
- ɖ = voiced alveolar affricate
- ð = voiced interdental fricative
- e = open-mid vowel from the front series
- ɛ = semivocalic e
- ɛ̃ = open e (between e and ɛ)
- f = voiceless labio-dental fricative
- g = voiced velar plosive
- ḡ = soft voiced post-palatal affricate
- ḡ̃ = voiced palatal plosive
- ɣ = voiced velar fricative

- ʧ = voiced palatal fricative  
 h = voiced velar fricative  
 ɣ = voiced pharyngeal fricative  
 ɥ = voiceless palatal fricative  
 i = the closest vowel from the front series  
 i̯ = open *i*  
 ḭ = short *i*  
 i̠ = semivocalic *i*  
 î = the closest vowel from the central series  
 j = voiced prepalatal fricative  
 jʰ = soft *j*  
 k = voiceless velar plosive identical with *c*; the symbol is used before the vowels from the front series (e.g.: *keptu*, “chest” in the Grabova speech)  
 k̟ = voiceless palatal velar plosive  
 l = lateral alveolar *l*  
 lʰ = lateral palatalized *l*  
 ł = lateral velarized *l*  
 m = nasal bilabial plosive  
 n = nasal dental plosive  
 ɲ = nasal plosive slightly palatalized  
 ñ = nasal palatal plosive  
 ŋ = velar nasal plosive, followed by *c*, *g*  
 o = mid-open vowel from the back series  
 o̠ = semivocalic *o*  
 o̡ = open *o* (between *o* and *ɔ*)  
 p = voiceless bilabial plosive  
 r = apical-alveolar trill  
 r̄ = *r* with several trills  
 ρ = uvular *r*  
 ρρ = *ρ* with several trills  
 s = voiceless alveolar fricative  
 ʃ = voiceless prepalatal fricative  
 b = soft *ʃ*  
 t = voiceless dental plosive  
 θ = voiceless interdental fricative  
 ʈ = voiceless alveolar affricate  
 u = the closest vowel from the back series  
 u̯ = short *u*  
 u̠ = semivocalic *u*  
 v = voiced labio-dental fricative  
 w = voiced bilabial fricative  
 y = voiced palatal fricative (between ʧ and i̯)  
 z = voiced alveolar fricative

## Diacritical signs

- ˘ = (above a vowel or a diphthong) main stress: *cásă* “house”, *lúcrú* “work”,  
*pátru* “four”  
 ~ = (above a vowel) nasality: *își* “ieși”, Eng. “he (she) went out”  
 ˙ = (under voiced vowels or consonants) voiceless: *ș*  
 ˘ = (under vowels) openness: *î*  
 ˘ = (under vowels) it signals that the vowel is the consonant element of a  
 diphthong; e.g: *îáspi* in standard Romanian “viespe”, Eng. “wasp”, *l'au* in  
 standard Romanian orthography “iau”, Eng. “I take”  
 ı, â, ȳ etc. = slightly audible sounds

