

Turkish Loanwords and Toponymic Influences in the Southern Albanian Dialect: A Linguistic Insight into the Labëria Region

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Abstract: *Loanwords are linguistic units borrowed from another language. Borrowing constitutes the process of requisition of material from another language. The phenomenon of borrowing occurs when two languages come into contact. Words borrowed might contain sounds which are foreign to the recipient language and therefore they must be changed in order to completely fit the local sounds. This article examines the influence of Turkish loanwords and toponyms on the Southern Albanian dialect, particularly within the Labëria region. Drawing from etymological sources and fieldwork with native speakers, it identifies Turkish-derived terms that have been integrated into everyday vocabulary and place names. The study highlights the historical depth of linguistic exchange between Albanians and Turks, reflecting centuries of socio-political interaction. By analyzing specific lexical items and their semantic retention or adaptation, the research offers insights into language contact, cultural memory, and the evolution of regional dialects in Albania.*

Keywords: Turkish loanwords, Albanian dialects, toponymy, language contact, Labëria region

1. Introduction

As toponyms reflect the life of an area, they deserve special attention while studying the history of that area. The region of Vlorë, particularly the area called Labëria, because of its highly varied terrain, is extremely rich in place names, which possess multifaceted values with respect to naming, word formation and lexicology at large. The present study on the Vlorë region toponyms focuses on the place names that contain Slavic and Greek elements in their structure. The study material is, basically, from the research of various authors, mostly Albanian. The bulk of the toponyms used here have been collected in field studies, while working with elderly local people and shepherds of the respective zones, who provided us with material of great interest in this domain. The study has cognitive and scientific values and bears witness to the early contacts between peoples. It attempts to further complete and enrich the toponymy of the Vlorë region. The purpose of this article is to explore the presence and usage of Turkish loanwords in the Southern Albanian dialect, with a specific focus on toponyms and culturally embedded vocabulary.

The collection and systematization of the toponymy of different areas of the region would also be of interest in compiling a toponomastic dictionary in this field of study. Onomastics is an autonomous discipline, but it overlaps the subject matter of many other disciplines since it deals with the study of the names and the names are closely connected with the human activity. Onomastics consists of two large groups of names: a) anthroponyms (names of people) and b) toponyms (names of places, names of inhabited places, nationalities, regions, seas, lakes, rivers, mountains, fields, hills, etc. Toponyms, as an object of study in onomastics, are an important part of the ethnolinguistic profile of a region. They preserve historical elements and reveal both past and present geographical contexts of the region. The antiquity of a people can be documented not only by archaeological excavations, old writings left by ancient

historians, but also by toponyms, where we can find preserved elements which have resisted through centuries and can be clarified by using modern language. When we consult the Albanian Dictionary we notice that the Albanian language has got a great number of loan words. One of the reasons is the contacts of the Albanian people with other peoples who have left their mark in our language, especially in the lexicon.

2. Literature Review

Main sources of the borrowed words in Albanian language are from Ancient and Modern Greek, from Latin, Turkish, Italian, the Balkan Slavic languages etc. The ethnic origins of Albanians were rooted in Pelasgians, who are known as one of the oldest tribes in Europe. Albanians came from Illyrians and their language, Albanian language occupies an independent branch of Indo-European language tree. Albanian language has its origin from her mother language, Illyrian, but, if we consult the Albanian Language Dictionary, we can notice that there are a lot of borrowings from other languages which it has had historical relations such as Greek, Latin, Slavic and Turkish ones. Language contact significantly shapes linguistic evolution, especially in culturally diverse societies. Historical relations between the Albanians and Turkish started since the fourteenth century until the second half of the nineteenth century. Albania was under the Turkish invasion for about five hundred years and during that period a lot of Turkish words penetrated into the Albanian language. A great number of Turkish loan words can be found especially in the state documents of that period.[1] The influence of Turkish borrowings in Albanian language is deeply rooted in centuries of Ottoman rule. Unlike the other language borrowings found in the Albanian language, Turkish borrowed words belong, mainly to the period of documented written language. This happened because Turkish language was used as an official language in Albania during the Ottoman occupation. According to the well known Albanian linguist, prof. Cabej, the corpus of

Turkish loanwords in Albanian reflects long-standing linguistic interaction between the two peoples, Turkish and Albanian.[2] Turkish is one of the main sources of enriching the vocabulary of the Albanian language. Borrowed words from Turkish language were incorporated in the Albanian language in all aspects of life such as literature, religion, administrative documents and other written texts. Turkish became the main language in governmental institutions, trade and social life in Albania. If we consult the Dictionary of Albanian language, we can count nearly 4406 words borrowed from Turkish language.[3] Many Albanian linguists such as E. Çabej, A. Kostallari, G. Mayer etc. studied the main sources of the borrowed words in the Albanian language. The linguist T. Dizdari is well known for his manuscript Dictionary of Orientalism, which is considered as one of the most important studies for Turkish borrowed words in Albanian language. As professor Çabej said “they have become Albanian's own flesh and blood” Turkisms in Albanian language are words of a general character assigned to vocabulary areas such as those of names of certain regions (toponyms) and proper names. The greatest number of toponyms of Turkish source in Albania can be found in its Northern part, but we can also find some toponyms of Turkish origin in the Southern part of Albania, especially in Labëria region.

3. Turkish borrowings in the Albanian Southern Dialect

In the region of Labëria, toponymy is of linguistic and historical interest. Toponyms in this region speak of the antiquity of the inhabitants, the names transferred during the conquests, the social, economic, political and spiritual evolution of this region. The toponymic investigations in this region prove that some of the geographical names of different places are of Turkish origin. The relations between Turkish and Albanians go far back in time. Taking into consideration the richness and variety of toponymy in the region of Labëria, we should mention those of Turkish sources: *Ceribash*, *Çiflik*, *Guri i Kadiut*, *Harapë*, *Karaburun*, *Kullxhi*, *Mekami*, *Sanxhak*, *Shpella e Selman Aliut*, *Shkalla e Turkut*, *Vakefe*. Toponymic investigations prove that the names of these places were given names of Turkish origin during the time of Ottoman invasion which lasted for about five hundred years in Albania. Turkish words can be widely found in all walks of life in Albania. The use of Turkish words in agriculture has been less widespread. The Ottoman Empire's long rule over Albania resulted in a substantial number of Turkish loanwords, particularly in areas related to administration, food, and everyday life. Many plant names borrowed from old Turkish are primarily used in local Albanian dialects, for example:

başame (almond), *jargavan* (lily), *jasemin* (jasmin flower), *bamje* (okra), *karafil* (clove), *enginar* (artichoke), *hashash*, (hashish), *majdanos* (parsley), *badër* (asphodels), *çinar* (plane tree), *karpuz* (watermelon), *bostan* (vegetable orchard), *merak* (anxiety), *minaret* (minaret), *dollap* (closet)

In the Albanian language there are even cases of literal translations from Turkish, as is the case of the flower *dorëzonjë* (honeysuckle), which is a literal translation from Turkish of the flower name *hanım eli*.

In 2005, the “Dictionary of Orientalism” prepared by T. Dizdari

was published in Albanian language. About 4500 borrowed words from Turkish are included in this dictionary. We have tried to present some of these Turkish loan words of this dictionary which are used even today in the vocabulary of the Lab dialect in Albanian language.

ADET: In the Dictionary of Albanian Language this word is presented in the conversational meaning: **habit**: *old, bad, new habit*.

If we consult the Etymological Dictionary of Albanian Language, [4] the Albanian linguist, Topalli explains: **habit** (adet; doke). This word is a Turkish loan word with an Arabic source. The reference for this explanation was found by Topalli in: Meyer. [5]

In Turkish-Albanian / Albanian -Turkish dictionary, the word: **âdet**, is given with the same meaning as Etymological Dictionary of Albanian Language.

ÇIRAK- In Albanian Language Dictionary this word is presented as: historic word; a boy who worked as a helper without payment for a craftsman to learn the professional skills; Outdated Word: A small boy doing auxiliary work at a store. The second meaning: **servant**. [6]

The well-known Albanian linguist, Topalli explains the word meaning in the Etymological Dictionary of the Albanian language as: a **helper, a servant**; an outdated word used in two dialects. This word was borrowed from Turkish, sourced from the Persian. The first meaning of this word in Turkish language was a kind of lamp making light. Also in Albanian language the meaning of this word has remained the same as Turkish. The Turkish origin of this word can be proved by consulting the reference used by Topalli. [7]

This word can be found in the Turkish-Albanian / Albanian - Turkish dictionary, and, according to this dictionary, the word: **çirak** means **helper**.

çiflig - According to the Albanian Language Dictionary it means hereditary private estate [8]

HAN: In Albanian Language Dictionary this word is presented as: conversational words. The first outdated meaning: a **guesthouse** for those traveling with animals. The second meaning with a negative connotation; **unclean hotel**. The figurative meaning, which is still preserved in Albanian language, is a **messy place**. We can find a clear explanation of the meaning of this word in the Etymological Dictionary of Albanian language as: Guesthouse for travelers who have animals with themselves. It is an Albanian word, borrowed from Turkish language with Persian source. The reference to this word is found by Topalli in: Meyer. [9] While in Turkish-Albanian / Albanian -Turkish dictionary, the word: **han**, is explained as: a **guesthouse** for those traveling with animals.

IMAMBAJALLDI – According to the Albanian Language Dictionary it is explained as a kind of dish, eggplant stuffed with onion, tomatoes, garlic, meat and cooked. [10]

PESHQIR. The explanation for this word in the Albanian Language Dictionary this word is as follows: The first meaning:

A thick piece of cotton, soft, with fluff, used to wipe the face, hands and body after washing up. The second meaning: anatomy. *Fat thin membrane* that covers the outside part of the stomach or intestines. The third meaning, slang words: Women square *serviette*. The fourth, slang use: *Napkin*, serviette. While in the Etymological Dictionary of the Albanian language, it is explained as: a thick piece of cotton that is used to wipe.; a word used in Albanian language, Borrowed from Turkish.

4. Some between cases of borrowed words

This study highlights examples of Turkish borrowings still used in Southern Albanian dialects.

PAZAR – *It is a* word used in colloquial speech which in its first meaning can be replaced by the word *market or treg*. In the Explanatory Dictionary of the Albanian language, this word is found in three meanings. 1-As a term in commerce: the entirety of *people who buy and sell* in the market. 2. a deal between the buyer and the seller *for the* price of something; commerce. 3- Figurative usage: *The place* where anyone comes in, mess, great noise.

PESHQESH. This is a word used in daily conversation. Its meaning is *gift*. It is used so much in the Albanian Tosk dialect although it can be substituted by the Albanian word *dhuratë*. The explanation of the meaning for this word of Turkish origin in Dictionary of the Albanian language is: 1-Gift given to someone for wedding or other special occasion. In the Etymological Dictionary of the Albanian language, considering the etymology of this word We can read: Peshqir- gift, borrowed from Turkish language, sourced from Persian language. [11]. In Turkish-Albanian / Albanian -Turkish dictionary, the word: *peşkeş*, means *gift*.

KATRANOS. According to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Albanian language, the main meaning of the word *katranos* is *to lubricate with tar*. The second meaning is *to drizzle* and the third meaning, which is used in colloquial Albanian is *to work badly, to destroy something*. According to the Etymological Dictionary of the Albanian language we can find the explanation of this word as *Katran* [12] In Turkish-Albanian / Albanian - Turkish dictionary, the word: is given with the meaning: *katran-tar*.

VILAJET. According to the Albanian Language Dictionary it means *an administrative province in the Osman Emperor* [13]

5. Conclusion

This study confirms that the Turkish language has left a lasting imprint on the Southern Albanian dialect, particularly through place names and commonly used lexical items. These borrowings illustrate historical depth, cultural fusion, and the resilience of linguistic adaptation over centuries of contact. While many Turkish-origin words have been seamlessly integrated into everyday speech, they also reflect the socio-political dynamics of Albania's Ottoman past. This work lays a foundation for further investigation into the interplay of language, history, and regional identity in the Albanian context.

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