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Introduction: Balkan Romance Within the Balkan Sprachbund

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Abstract: This article provides a short introduction to Balkan Romance, examining and exemplifying a number of its principal features. In particular, the discussion begins in §2 with a review of the main morphosyntactic features of the four principal sub-branches of Old Romanian spoken today within the Balkan Sprachbund (Daco-Romanian, Aromanian, Istro-Romanian, and Megleno-Aromanian), tracing the treatment of such Balkanisms both in the traditional philological literature (§3) and their more recent formalization and expansion in the theoretical literature dedicated to the Balkan Sprachbund (§4). This is followed in §5 by a discussion of some of the dialects spoken in southern Italy and their key morphosyntactic features. These varieties, although not situated in the Balkan Sprachbund proper, have nonetheless either developed under contact with Balkan languages, as in the case of the Romance dialects of the extreme south of Italy which have been in centuries-long contact with Greek (§5.1), or, in the case of Italo-Albanian, have evolved under contact with local Italo-Romance varieties (§5.2). The discussion concludes in §6 with an overview of the principal issues discussed in each of the contributions.

Keywords: Balkan Romance; Balkan Sprachbund; Daco-Romanian; Aromanian; Istro-Romanian; Megleno-Romanian; Calabrese; Salentino; Greko; Griko

1. Introduction

The term *Balkan Romance* may be interpreted in two ways: either (i) as languages that derive from Old Romanian and are spoken in the Balkan Peninsula (labeled as *Romanian languages* in this volume) or (ii) as languages of the Latin phylum that display morphosyntactic properties typical of the Balkan Sprachbund. This volume adopts the second approach, such that the languages investigated here belong not only to the more restricted Romanian phylum but also to the more encompassing Latin phylum through the inclusion of the dialects of Italy that developed under contact with Balkan languages.

2. Areal Presentation

The term *Balkan languages* denotes a group of languages and dialects spoken on the Balkan Peninsula. This group can be roughly subdivided into Balkan Slavic (e.g., Bulgarian, Croatian), Balkan Romance (Romanian phylum), Albanian, Greek, Romani, and some Turkish dialects. The shared linguistic properties of this group constitute the *Balkan Sprachbund*, which is characterized “by intersecting and overlapping micro-zones of convergence, with the mechanisms responsible being bilingualism, code-switching, calquing, and accommodation in face-to-face interactions of a sustained and highly interpersonal level”. (Friedman & Joseph, 2017, p. 55).¹



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Romanian languages, largely mutually unintelligible today, originate from the Old Romanian spoken to the north of the Danube: groups of Old Romanian speakers settled at various locations at the south of the Danube at different points in time, long before the time of the first attested Old Romanian documents (viz. 16th century). The major Romanian languages today are as follows:

- **Daco-Romanian**, spoken in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, with pockets of speakers in Serbia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Hungary.
- **Aromanian**, spoken in Greece, Macedonia (where it has official status), Albania (where it has been introduced in schools), Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria. (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/rup/>, accessed on 19 December 2024)
- **Megleno-Romanian**, an endangered language spoken primarily at the border between Greece and North Macedonia. Communities of speakers are found in Greece, Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey. (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/ruq/>, accessed on 19 December 2024)
- **Istro-Romanian**, a seriously endangered language spoken in two villages of the Istrian Peninsula in Croatia. Croatian provides a language contact environment. (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/ruo/>, accessed on 19 December 2024)

The map in Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of Romanian languages.² Notably, each of these languages displays dialectal and regional variations.



Figure 1. Map of the territories where Romanian languages are spoken.

3. Philology

A long tradition of philological studies (for an overview, see Mišeska Tomić, 2006) identified a number of morphosyntactic properties shared by languages spoken in the Balkan Peninsula despite their genealogic diversity. These represent the signature properties of the Balkan Sprachbund, such that, whenever they are encountered in a variety spoken outside the Balkan Peninsula, the possibility of language contact with a Balkan language must be considered, as in the case of Judezmo (Friedman & Joseph, 2014). The list of these properties, established on the basis of a variety of philological studies (Sandfeld, 1930/1968; Schaller, 1975; Solta, 1980 a.o.), is illustrated in (1) to (6) with examples from Daco-Romanian:

- (i) declension peculiarities:
- (a) the syncretism of genitive and dative case inflections where preserved (1a)
- (1) a. vorbește elevilor ↔ cartea elevilor
 talks students.the.DAT ↔ book.the students.the.GEN
 ‘S/he talks to the students.’ ↔ ‘the students’ book’
- (b) the substitution of synthetic case markers by analytic prepositional markers; for instance, inflectional dative (cf. 1a) is being replaced in some cases by a prepositional version (e.g., *la* ‘to’) that introduces an uninflected noun phrase as the indirect object (1b);
- (1) b. Dă mâncare pisicii → Dă mâncare la pisică.
 gives food cat.the.DAT gives food to cat
 ‘S/he gives food to the cat.’
- (ii) grammaticalization of the category of definiteness through postpositive definite articles (as opposed to prenominal definite articles in the other Romance languages).
- (2) masă → masa / mesele; pom → pomul/ pomii
 table table.the tables.the tree tree.the trees.the
- (iii) pronominal doubling of objects by the corresponding direct or indirect object clitic pronoun:
- (3) Directorul i_k-a convocat [pe elevi]_k.
 director.the them.CL.3PL.ACC-has called DOM-P students
 ‘The director summoned the students.’
- (iv) analytic WANT-future (*voi* from *vrea* ‘want’ < Lat. **volere*)
- (4) Voi pleca.
 will.1SG leave.INF
 ‘I will leave.’
- (v) generalization of analytic perfect with the auxiliary HAVE (instead of BE) for indicative present perfect forms of active verbs in a number of languages (though not all of them).
- (5) Am mâncat/ plecat.
 have.1 eaten left
 ‘I/we have eaten/left.’
- (vi) loss of the infinitive and its substitution by subjunctive clauses
- (6) Am vrut să plec. < *Am vrut a pleca.
 have.1 wanted SBJV leave.1SG have.1 wanted to leave.INF
 ‘I wanted to leave.’

According to the literature overview in Mišeska Tomić (2006), a morphosyntactic peculiarity qualifies as a Balkan Sprachbund property only if it satisfies the following two conditions: (i) it is shared by at least three languages of the area, and at least two of these must belong to different genetic families; (ii) it is not present in all the languages of the genetic family to which the language of the area belongs.

4. Formal Studies

The qualifying criteria for Balkan Sprachbund status allow for the extension of the list above in the light of new approaches promoted in formal syntax. In particular, analyses within comparative syntax have established common parametric settings across the Balkan languages which went unnoticed or were barely discussed in previous philological studies. Today, the list of Balkan Sprachbund properties can be expanded to include the following:

- Genuine VSO word order:³

(7) Nu cheamă nimeni pe nimeni.
Not calls nobody DOM-P nobody
'Nobody calls anybody.'

Genuine VSO order arises whenever the subject surfaces in its base-generated argument position, viz. SpecvP (Alboiu, 2002; Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou, 1998, a.o.) and the verb moves to a higher functional position within the sentential core, thereby yielding VS order. This parametric setting occurs in all the languages of the Balkan Peninsula.

- DOM: differential object marking

(8) a. (L_k)-a felicitat [pe fiecare]_k.
him.CL.3SG.ACC-has congratulated DOM-P every.one
'S/he has congratulated everyone.'
b. (I_k)-a răspuns [fiecărui elev]_k.
him.CL.3SG.DAT-has answered every.DAT.M.SG student
'S/he has answered every student.'

In certain Balkan languages, clitic doubling as in (8) is used for the differential marking of direct and indirect objects, a phenomenon licensed by the high degree of referentiality and topicality found in such contexts which involve specific/ definite referents (Mišeska Tomić, 2006). Daco-Romanian alone is also sensitive to the animacy scale. The discourse effect of clitic doubling in terms of DOM is more prevalent in Romanian, Bulgarian, and Greek (Kallulli, 2018), thereby fulfilling its qualification as a Balkan Sprachbund property. This operation is different from clitic left-dislocation which occurs in all the Balkan languages.

- Raising and control

(9) a. Se pare că elevii votează în grupuri.
SE.ARB seems that students.the vote.IND.3 in groups
'It seems that the students vote in groups.'
b. Elevii par să voteze în grupuri.
students.the seem.3PL SBJV vote.SBJV.3 in groups
'The students seem to vote in groups.'
(10) Elevii s-au apucat să voteze.
students.the REFL.3=HAVE.3PL started SBJV vote.SBJV.3
'The students started to vote.'

In all Balkan languages, athematic verbs such as SEEM allow for the subject of a complement clause to raise to the root-clause subject position whenever the embedded verb occurs in the subjunctive, as in (9b), but not when it occurs in the indicative, as in (9a). The same operation requires an infinitival verb in other languages (e.g., Romance or English). Furthermore, similar raising takes place also under obligatory control, as in (10), where the subject of the embedded subjunctive clause raises to the matrix subject position. In other Romance varieties, the same operation involves a different structure relying on co-indexing, not on movement (Alboiu, 2007). Subject raising out of subjunctive clauses is found in all the Balkan languages, but not in genetically related languages outside of the Balkan Sprachbund (e.g., French).

- Subject-to-object raising (SOR):

(11) Am văzut-o pe Maria că vrea să plece.
have.1 seen=her.CL.3SG.F.ACC DOM-P Maria that want.IND.3 SBJV leave.SBJV.3
'I saw that Maria intends to leave.'

Romanian, Bulgarian, and Greek display biclausal sentences in which a matrix verb of perception allows for the subject of the finite complement to surface as the object of the matrix clause (e.g., *pe Maria*). This is different from the raising in (9) and (10), insofar as the raising in (11) starts from an indicative clause, not from a subjunctive clause (Alboiu & Hill, 2016; Hill, 2021), and the movement targets the object (not the subject) position in the matrix clause.

There is no doubt that formal studies will continue to discover new syntactic patterns that are specific to the Balkan Sprachbund and deepen our understanding of the already established patterns. The papers included in this volume contribute to such studies.

5. The Case of the Dialects of Italy

Membership of the Balkan Romance group is not limited to Romanian languages, since Balkan Sprachbund properties are also found in the Romance dialects of the extreme south of Italy spoken in Salento, southern Calabria, and, to a lesser degree, northeastern Sicily, since in this area, traditionally known as *Magna Graecia* (cf. Figure 2),⁴ Greek was once spoken extensively.



Figure 2. Historical areas of Greek colonization in southern Italy.

5.1. Greek in Southern Italy

Greek has been spoken as an indigenous language in southern Italy since ancient times (Falcone, 1973, pp. 12–38; Horrocks, 1997, pp. 304–306; Manolissou, 2005, pp. 112–121). According to one, albeit now unpopular, view championed most notably by Rohlfs (1924, 1933, 1974, 1977), the Greek spoken in southern Italy, henceforth Italo-Greek, is to be considered a direct descendant of the ancient (mainly Doric) Greek varieties which were

imported into *Magna Graecia* as early as the eighth century BCE with the establishment of numerous Greek colonies along the coasts of southern Italy. The opposing—and now widely accepted—view, argued most vehemently by Battisti (1927; cf. also Morosi, 1870; Parlangèli, 1953), takes the Greek of southern Italy to be a more recent import dating from the Byzantine period of domination between the sixth and eleventh centuries (though see Fanciullo (2007) for a conciliatory approach to these apparently two opposing views). Whatever the correct view, it is clear that by the beginning of the second millennium CE, Greek was still widely spoken as a native language in northwestern Sicily, Calabria, and Salento in southern Apulia. Indeed, as late as the fourteenth century, Petrarch (*De rebus senilibus* XI, 9) advised those wishing to study Greek to go to Calabria.

Today, by contrast, Italo-Greek survives precariously only in a handful of villages of southern Calabria and Salento in the respective areas of Bovesia and Grecia Salentina. In Bovesia, where the local variety of Greek is known as *Greko* (though usually known as *grecanico* in Italian), the language is today confined to five remote villages of the Aspromonte mountains (Bova (Marina), Chorío di Rochudi, Condofuri, Galliciano, and Roghudi (Nuovo)), where the language is in a very precarious position. In Grecia Salentina, on the other hand, the language, known locally as *Griko*, has fared somewhat better, in that it continues to be spoken by a larger number of speakers in a pocket of seven villages of the Otranto Peninsula (Calimera, Castrignano dei Greci, Corigliano d'Otranto, Martano, Martignano, Sternatia, and Zollino). Although Greek was extensively spoken in southern Italy for centuries, following the gradual expansion first of Latin and then what were to become the local Romance varieties in this same area, Greek and Romance came to be used alongside each other in a complex situation of diglossia with expanding bilingualism. As a consequence, the Romance dialects of these two areas, namely Calabrese and Salentino, display unmistakable structural influences from Italo-Greek, since they first emerged among speakers whose mother tongue was Greek (the 'substrate') and continued to develop and expand to the present day in the shadow of the surrounding, albeit shrinking, Italo-Greek dialects (the 'adstrate').

The influence of Greek on the Romance dialects of southern Italy is generally considered therefore to offer one of the most spectacular, and least controversial, cases of language contact within the Italian Peninsula (see Ledgeway, 2013; Ledgeway et al., submitted). It is thus commonplace in the literature to claim that once extensive Greek-Romance bilingualism throughout the extreme south of Italy has given rise to an exceptional Hellenization of the local Romance dialects, as aptly summed up in Rohlfs' slogan *spirito greco, materia romanza* 'Greek soul, Romance (lexical) material' (cf. Rohlfs, 1933, p. 61; 1947, p. 55f). As a result, many of the Balkanisms noted above in §3–4 also hold for the Romance dialects of the extreme south of Italy where such features can be readily traced back to Italo-Greek. These include the following:

(i) Genitive-dative syncretism in many southern Calabrese dialects (though not in those of Salento), where, following the Greko pattern of extension of the genitive (12a) to mark RECIPIENTS (12b), the genitive preposition *di* 'of' (cf. 13a) may also be employed to mark RECIPIENTS (13b) where reflexes of the preposition *ad* 'to' are found in other Romance varieties, witness the contrast between *di* and *a* in Italian (14a–b) (Ledgeway et al., 2020, in prep: Chapter 2).

- (12) a. M' éstile o jóse tu riga. (Greko)
me= send.PST.PFV.3SG the.NOM son.NOM the.GEN king
'The son of the king sent me.'
- b. Èðú kai na píi tu yù tu megalu. (Greko)
give.PST.PFV.3PL IRR.that drink.SBJV.3PL the.GEN son.GEN the.GEN big.GEN
'They gave the older son something to drink.'

- (13) a. U libbru d-u prèvite. (Gioiosa Ionica, Calabria)
the book of-the priest
'The priest's book'
- b. Nci detti nu libbru d-u prèvite. (Gioiosa Ionica, Calabria)
DAT.3= give.PST.PFV.1SG a book of-the priest
'I gave a book to the priest.'
- (14) a. Il libro del prete. (Italian)
the book of.the priest
- b. Diedi un libro al prete. (Italian)
give.PST.PFV.1SG a book to.the priest

(ii) Frequent clitic doubling of direct and indirect objects (15b) following a pattern also found in the local Greek dialects (15a).

- (15) a. E Maria u_i ta_j doke [u Pietru]_i
the Maria him.GEN them.ACC give.PFV.PST.3SG the.GEN Pietro.GEN
[ta xartia cinuria]_j? (Griko)
the.NOM-ACC books.NOM-ACC new.NOM-ACC
- b. La Maria ne_i l'_j a dati [allu Pietru]_i [i libbri
the Maria DAT.3= them.ACC= have.3SG given.3PL to.the Pietro the books
novi]_j? (Presicce, Salento)
new
'Did Maria give Pietro the new books?'

(iii) The progressive replacement of the infinitive with finite subordination following a Balkan pattern widespread in the Greek dialects of southern Italy (Calabrese, 1993; Ledgeway, 1998; Lombardi, 1998; Ledgeway et al., submitted, Chapter 7). This finite pattern of subordination brings with it the use of at least a dual complementizer system (Ledgeway, 2004, 2005, 2006) which broadly distinguishes between irrealis clauses headed by *mu/ma/mi* (Calabria) or *cu* (Salento), on the one hand (17a), and realis clauses introduced by *ca* on the other (17b), replicating the distribution of the Italo-Greek irrealis and realis complementizers *na* and *ti* (the latter replaced in modern Griko with the Romance loan *ka*), as shown in (16a-b):

- (16) a. Δε fšeru igù na žusu pu e' nna
NEG= know.1SG I that.IRR live.SBJV.1SG how have.1SG that.IRR
kamu. (Greko)
do.SBJV.1SG
'I don't know how I am going to live.'
- b. Ti llegu ti e' nna χuristumi ndama. (Greko)
her.GEN= say.1SG that must that.IRR leave.1PL together
'I'll tell her that we have to leave together.'
- (17) a. Aiu mu vaiu mu viiu duv' aiu mu
have.1SG that.IRR go.1SG that.IRR see.1SG where have.1SG that.IRR
vvaiu oja. (Sant'Andrea, Calabria)
go.1SG today
'I have to go and see where I have to go today.'
- b. Ti cuntu ca vaiu oja. (Sant'Andrea, Calabria)
you= say.1SG that go.1SG today
'I'm telling you that I'm going today.'

(iv) Subject to object raising out of realis clauses embedded under a verb of perception (18b) in accordance with a Greek pattern (18a):

- (18) a. O Pietro ìcuse i Mmarìa ca fònazze o
 b. Lu Pietru ntise la Marìa ca chiamava lu
 the Pietro hear.PST.PFV.3SG the(.ACC) Maria(.ACC) that call.PST.IPFV.3SG the
 nannamurao. (Griko)
 zzitu (Calimera, Salento)
 boyfriend
 ‘Pietro heard that Maria was calling her boyfriend.’

(v) Generalization of a single perfective auxiliary, at least in Calabria where we find either generalized BE in the Romance dialects of Bova and surrounding villages (19b), just as in Greko (19a; cf. [Schifano et al., 2016](#); [Squillaci, 2017](#), § 2.7; [Remberger, 2018](#)), or generalized HAVE in most other southern Calabrese dialects (19c).⁵

- (19) a. Immo grazzonda. (Greko, Bova)
 be.PST.1SG write.N-FIN
 b. Eru scrivutu. (Calabrese, Bova)
 be.PST.IPFV.1SG written
 ‘I had written.’
 c. Aviva rurmutu / vinutu. (Reggio di Calabria)
 have.PST.IPFV.1SG slept come
 ‘I had slept/come.’

The Romance varieties of the extreme south of Italy have also replicated a number of other characteristic Greek structural features which, although not necessarily defined as core Balkanisms in the literature, are found in a variety of languages of the Balkan Peninsula. For example, in the area of morphology, the dialects of the extreme south lack a distinct category of manner adverbs (cf. the adverbial manner suffix *-mente* ‘-ly’ found in other Romance varieties, e.g., Italian *lenta-mente* ‘slow-ly’), the functions of which are syncretically fulfilled by the simple bare adjective (20b) in line with the corresponding Italo-Greek usage (20a), a characteristic also of Romanian (20c) (for further discussion, see [Ledgeway, 2011, 2017](#)).

- (20) a. O asciàdi mu pai calò. (Griko)
 the hat.NSG me= go.3SG good.NSG
 ‘The hat suits me.’
 b. Comu sai asare bellu! (Lecce, Salento)
 how know.2SG kiss.INF beautiful
 c. Ce frumos ştii să săruţi! (Romanian)
 what beautiful know.2SG SBJV kiss.2SG
 ‘How beautifully you can kiss!’

Also, in the area of syntax, the Romance dialects of the extreme south of Italy display numerous structural calques with the surrounding Italo-Greek dialects, notably the generalized use of the preterite on a par with the use of the Greek aorist as the sole past perfective tense (21a-b), where other Italo-Romance dialects typically employ an analytic auxiliary+participle paradigm to distinctively mark the present perfect (Cf. [Remberger, 2009; 2011](#), p. 131f.; [Katsoyannou & Guentchéva, 2018](#), pp. 124–127; [Loporcaro, 2021](#), p. 181; [Ledgeway et al., 2023](#)). Although this is not necessarily a strong Balkan feature, it does find a parallel in, for example, the southeastern regional varieties of Daco-Romanian, especially those spoken in Oltenia (21c), and in Megleno-Romanian and Aromanian where

the preterite represents the usual exponent of the past perfective (Zafiu, 2013, p. 58f.; Maiden, 2016, p. 109).

- (21) a. Δεν **efáni** o yóssu? (Greko)
 NEG= appear.PST.PFV.3SG the son=your
 ‘Has your son not turned up?’
- b. Tutti ‘ssi cosi ormai **diventaru** normali. (Catanzaro, Calabria)
 all these things now become.PST.PFV.3PL normal
 ‘All these things have now become normal.’
- c. Unde **fuseși** de dimineață? – Mă **dusei** până la
 where be.PST.PFV.3SG of morning me= lead.PST.PFV.1SG as.far.as to
 moară. (regional Romanian of Oltenia, Zafiu, 2013, p. 59)
 mill
 ‘Where were you this morning?—I went to the mill.’

Also indicative of Greek contact is the widespread use of (a) paratactic structures (cf. Ledgeway, 2016a, 2016b) variously involving asyndeton (22a) and pseudo-coordination (22b), a feature also common to Romanian (Croitor, 2014, 2017; Gruianu, 2016; Ross, 2021, pp. 124–126) as well as across the Balkans more generally (Sandfeld, 1900, pp. 81–99; 1904; 1930/1968, pp. 196–201), with examples such as (22c); (b) the imperfect indicative in the protasis and apodosis of counterfactual hypothetical clauses (23a–b; cf. Rohlf, 1977, p. 195f.; 1997, pp. 306–315; Schwägerl, 2006, pp. 12, 15f, 22f.) in line with a modal extension of the imperfect considered by Mišeska Tomić (2004, p. 6f.) to represent a Balkanism; and (c) the definite article in conjunction with proper names (24b; cf. De Angelis, 2019; Ledgeway et al., submitted, Chapter 4), though generally lost today in most southern Calabrese dialects, in accordance with a pattern found not only in Italo-Greek (24a; cf. Rohlf, 1977, p. 181) but also more widely across the Balkans, witness the behavior of feminine personal names in Daco-Romanian (24c; cf. Miron-Fulea et al., 2013; Cornilescu & Nicolae, 2015).

- (22) a. Pame ce drome. (Griko)
 go.1PL and eat.1PL
 ‘We’re going to eat.’
- b. Crammatina lu sçia’ ccattamu. (Lecce, Salento)
 tomorrow.morning it= go.PRS.1PL buy.PRS.1PL
 ‘We’ll go and buy it tomorrow.’
- c. Stă și scrie. (Romanian, Croitor, 2013, p. 516)
 stay.3SG and write.3SG
 ‘He is writing.’
- (23) a. An ișera pu m’ épie tim búđđa, san gáđaro
 if knew.PST.IPFV.1SG who me=take.PST.PFV.3SG the hen like ass
 ton éđenna áše stađđa. (Greko)
 him= tie.PST.IPFV.1SG to stable
 ‘If I knew who stole my hen, I would tie them to the stable like an ass.’
- b. Iva si non chivìa. (Melito di Porto Salvo, Calabria)
 go.PST.IPFV.1SG if NEG= rain.PST.IPFV.3SG
 ‘I would go if it were not raining.’

- (24) a. Efònase to pedi to mea ce puru ton Antonài. (Griko)
 call.PST.PFV.3SG the son the big and also the Antonuccio
 ‘He called to him his eldest son as well as Antonuccio.’
- b. Quistu dev’ èssere lu Pascali. (Scorrano, Salento)
 this must.PRS.3SG be.INF the Pasquale
 ‘This must be Pasquale.’
- c. Am întâlnit-o pe Ana. (< Ană ‘Ana’ + -a ‘DEF.NOM-ACC.FSG’; Romanian)
 have.1SG met=her DOM Ana.DEF.NOM-ACC.FSG
 ‘I met Ana.’

In light of data like those reviewed above for Calabrese and Salentino, there is a clear typological motivation for considering the Romance dialects of the extreme south of Italy fully fledged members of the Balkan Romance group.

5.2. The Case of Italo-Albanian

Another Balkan language spoken today in 50 villages scattered across different regions of southern Italy (Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, and Sicily) is Albanian—known locally as (*lingua*) *arbëreschë* in Italian and as *arbërisht(ja)* in Italo-Albanian—following migrations from Epirus (southern Albania/northern Greece) and The Morea Peninsula (Peloponese) between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries (for an overview, see [Manzini & Savoia, 2007, 2018](#); [Savoia, 2010, 2015](#); [Thal et al., 2018](#)). Unlike the more prestigious Greek characterized by a long presence in large compact areas of southern Italy, Italo-Albanian is not only a more recent import but is also spoken in numerous unconnected and isolated villages strewn across southern Italy. As a consequence, Italo-Albanian has had very little or no linguistic impact on the surrounding Romance varieties in contrast to what was observed above in the case of Greek-Romance contact. There has, however, been contact, albeit in the other direction such that Arbëresh dialects often display significant Romance influence from the local dialects and (regional) Italian, not only in their lexis (e.g., Vena di Maida (Calabria): Arb. [lɛn'ðɔl] ‘(bed) sheet’ < ItR. [lɛn'tsɔlu]) and phonology (e.g., Vena di Maida (Calabria): [f] > [h] in Arb. *cafa* > *caha* ‘neck.DEF’, cf. ItR. *bufa* > *buha* ‘toad’) but also in numerous aspects of their morphosyntax ([Breu, 2021](#)). To take just one representative example from [Savoia and Baldi \(2023, p. 12f.\)](#), many Romance dialects of central Calabria, such as that spoken in Vena di Maida, mark a voice distinction in the auxiliary system with perfective HAVE generalized across all active contexts, including transitives (25a) and unaccusatives (25b), in contrast to BE licensed in all remaining non-active contexts such as the passive and stative periphrases (25c). This exact same pattern of central Calabrian auxiliary distribution is found in the Arbëresh of Vena di Maida, where there is a HAVE–BE split in accordance with an active (25a’-b’) vs. non-active (25c’) distinction.

- (25) a. (sta kamisa) l avia ripetts-a-t-u. (ItR., Vena di Maida)
 a. (kumiʃə-nə) ε kɛʒ ripetts-a-rə. (Arb., Vena di Maida)
 this shirt(-ACC) it= have.PST.IPFV.1SG darn-TV-PTCP(-MSG)
 ‘(This shirt,) I had darned it.’
- b. avia ven-u-t-u.
 b. kɛʒ ard-urə.
 have-PST.IPFV.3SG come-(TV)-PTCP(-MSG)
 ‘She had come.’

c.	st-a	kamis-a	ε	ripεtts-a-t-a. (ItR., Vena di Maida)
	this-FSG	shirt-FSG	be.3SG	darn-TV-PTCP-FSG
c.′	kjɔ	kumif	εft	ripetts-a-t. (Arb., Vena di Maida)
	this	shirt	be.3SG	darn-TV-PTCP.SG
	‘This shirt is (being) darned’			

The parallels extend beyond auxiliary selection, inasmuch as the participle in the examples in (25) invariably fails to show agreement in both dialect groups in active contexts but regularly agrees in non-active contexts (cf. the plural form of the Arb. non-active participle *ripetts-a-t-a* found in conjunction with plural subjects).

6. The Contributions in This Volume

The studies included in this collection contribute to a better understanding of the properties shared by Balkan Romance languages, as well as the cross-linguistic micro-variations found within this group. The literature summarized in the previous sections attributes the shared properties to areal factors that, at some point in history, created the conditions for intensive language contact and bilingualism in the Balkan Peninsula. In this volume, this observation is refined by the acknowledgement of a two-tiered language contact scenario: the first tier is chronologically remote, the second is chronologically more recent and potentially ongoing. For example, the Balkan properties of Romanian languages are explicitly attributed here to Old Romanian, which emerged in a situation of bilingualism with proto-Bulgarian. Although this particular situation ceased early on in this era, bilingualism was renewed some five to seven centuries later when speakers of Old Romanian settled in different parts of the Balkan Peninsula and became minorities in relation to other ethnic groups.

6.1. Nominal Syntax

In the domain of nominal structure, **Savoia and Baldi** focus on micro-variation between Aromanian and Daco-Romanian in the marking of oblique possessives (dative and genitive): both languages have genitive inflected articles in these contexts, but it is only in Aromanian that these articles are (i) used only in conjunction with a prenominal possessive introducer and (ii) display free alternation of the possessive introducer with the preposition *di* ‘of’. Formally, the possessive introducer and the preposition are equated as a genitive case marking strategy, with no consequences for interpretation ([Chomsky, 2021](#)). In this respect, Aromanian is closer to Old Romanian grammar, whereas changes progressed much further in Daco-Romanian.

Possessives are also the topic of investigation of **Cardullo and Costea**’s article which compares the role of contact from Slavonic and Sicilian on the order of possessives in Megleno-Romanian and Eolian, respectively. Although Megleno-Romanian and Eolian appear to replicate the linear order found in their respective contact languages, the situation is shown to be much more complex and to ultimately follow from subtle differences in the N-movement parameter in the two varieties: Megleno-Romanian displays high N-movement with kinship terms but low N-movement with common nouns, whereas Eolian lacks N-to-D movement with kinship terms. The result is that different subclasses of nominal show distinct placements in relation to the possessive.

Isac focuses on the suffixal definite article and notes that, in complex noun phrases, the article surfaces on only one item (i.e., either noun or adjective) in Daco-Romanian and Aromanian, whereas it surfaces on every item in Megleno-Romanian and Istro-Romanian. The repetition of the definite article is attested in the history of Old Romanian texts but is well preserved only in Megleno- and Istro-Romanian. Formally, this micro-variation is shown

to arise as a consequence of a spell-out option (multiple instead of single pronunciation), not as a different syntactic setting of the definiteness parameter.

Another area of nominal structure concerns the possibility of differential object marking (DOM). **Guardiano, Irimia, and Stalfieri** point out a contrast in the realization of DOM in Romance languages (i.e., prenominal particle) and in Balkan languages (i.e., clitic doubling). Daco-Romanian combines these strategies, as do the Italo-Romance dialects discussed in this article (e.g., Ragusano, Francavillese, Neapolitan). Formally, the Balkan strategy supports syntactic operations that fail under the typical Romance strategy; for example, the clitic makes it possible for the direct object to bind into the subject, which is not possible in Spanish.

In sum, the nominal constructions discussed in this section show diachronic developments on the basis of the internal properties of each language, inherited from Old Romanian, rather than under the impact of a second tier of bilingualism. Even the development of DOM in the dialects of Italy is based on language internal properties (i.e., the reanalysis of a Latin preposition as a prenominal marker) that determined the way in which the Balkan feature (i.e., clitic doubling) was integrated into the derivation ([Hill & Mardale, 2021](#); [Ledgeway, 2023](#)).

6.2. Clausal Syntax

Clause structure is assessed in terms of microvariation in parametric settings and in the complementizer system. Briefly, Balkan Romance languages display V-to-T movement, but variation is attested as V-to-C (Balkan setting) and/or verb movement to a head lower than T (Old Romance setting). Within this context, the word order parameter may be VSO (Balkan setting) or SVO (Romance setting). Clitic pronouns also display variation in terms of their location, surfacing in the T- or C-domains. Finally, the complementizer system can vary insofar as the complementizer paradigm may undergo diachronic renewal and/or reanalysis. This is shown to be an area of intense change and cross-linguistic variation.

Morphosyntactic variation with verbs may arise under the impact of the dominant language in a bilingual context; for example, the past participle in Arbëresh discussed by **Turano**. Although verbal past participles are uninflected in Albanian, they became inflected in Arbëresh in all the environments in which the past participle is also inflected in Italian.

In other languages, though, morphosyntactic variations qualify as language internal phenomena. This the case of Daco-Romanian with mono-lingual speakers: **Ledgeway and Costea** argue that varieties of Daco-Romanian do not align with the V-to-T generalization proposed on the basis of the standard literary register (cf. [Schifano, 2018](#), pp. 63–66). In particular, various structural observations including word order tests based on adverb placement indicate that colloquial registers spoken in the west (e.g., Oltenia) display intra- and inter-speaker variation for V-to-T and V-to-v. They also identify similar patterns of alternation between high and low V-movement grammars across other sub-branches of Daco-Romance variously distributed in accordance with diatopic variation (Aromanian: north vs. south), diachronic and diagenational variation (Megleno-Romanian), and endogenous vs. exogenous factors (Istro-Romanian).

In the same vein, **Corbeanu and Geană** address the question of whether verb movement in Istro-Romanian may qualify as V2. They find that Istro-Romanian preserves some V-to-C (with V2 effects) in declaratives, but not in interrogatives, whereas Daco-Romanian shows the opposite options, with residual V2 only in interrogatives ([Rizzi & Roberts, 1989](#); [Rizzi, 1990](#)).

One of the most debated Balkan Sprachbund properties is the replacement of infinitive clauses with their subjunctive equivalents ([Joseph, 1983](#)). The speed and spread of this replacement differs from one language to another. An interesting observation along these

lines concerns the type of context in which the replacement emerges and develops. **De Angelis** notes that (un)markedness is important in this respect: data from the dialects of southern Italy attest to a gradual spread of the replacement from unmarked (realis) clauses to marked (irrealis) clauses. This is typologically significant since the data from Old Romanian (**Frâncu, 2009**) and from Romanian languages (**Alboiu and Hill, this volume**) attest to the opposite path, starting in clauses introduced by irrealis verbs (*verba voluntatis*) and extending towards clauses introduced by realis predicates (aspectuals).

The replacement of the infinitive with the subjunctive was shown in formal grammar to consist of paradigmatic renewal: when the infinitive loses the interpretable features that would allow it to check the uninterpretable features on C (clause typing, finiteness, modality), new equivalent morphological elements are recruited for that task (the push-and-pull chain in **Alboiu & Hill, 2016**). Bilingualism may or may not be a factor in this renewal. In Romanian languages, it is not, with the exception of Istro-Romanian. **Alboiu and Hill** show that the changes in the CP of subjunctive complements established for Old Romanian are still ongoing and are at different degrees of development in Romanian languages. Notably, the subjunctive particle *să* is being reanalyzed in two directions: (i) as a single (instead of a double) complementizer in complement clauses and (ii) as an inflectional mood marker stripped of complementizer features in constructions with the periphrastic future. Istro-Romanian is an exception to this dual path of reanalysis as it did not develop the periphrastic future. For this language, **Corbeanu and Hill** show that *se* becomes specialized for conditional CPs, being gradually replaced with *neca* in subjunctive CPs. The replacement is only a matter of lexical borrowing (from Croatian), since *neca* is syntactically treated in accordance with the Romanian (rather than the Croatian) grammatical pattern.

Overall, the micro-variations discussed in this volume come from two sources: (i) diachronic changes in Romanian languages; (ii) Balkanization of the dialects of southern Italy under language contact. The changes arise from fluid parametric settings, which, however, have clear stabilizing tendencies; that is, despite the variation, there is a preference for a certain setting over another. Cases in which such preferences are unclear coincide with fossilized structures and contribute to language loss (i.e., Istro-Romanian).

6.3. Outlook

The contributions in this Special Issue represent an important endeavor in highlighting the significance of studying Balkan Romance varieties for our broader understanding of language structure, variation, and change within Romance. Far too often such varieties have been overlooked in general treatments of Romance despite the fact that, as this Special Issue has demonstrated, the data they offer the linguist frequently force us to reconsider the extent of empirical variation found in Romance and what insights it brings for current theoretical thinking. Among other things, we have seen that investigations of Balkan Romance raise stimulating and original questions about comparative syntax, both in relation to diachronic change between different synchronic stages of the same language and across different languages and dialects of the same sub-branch, and, in particular, the role of language contact in inducing language change. Indeed, as is well known, the Balkans offer a spectacular laboratory from which to observe, both in diachrony and synchrony, the interaction of numerous languages which are at best only remotely related but which have ostensibly given rise to various degrees of linguistic convergence at all levels of linguistic analysis. As the case studies reviewed in this Special Issue have highlighted, comparative investigations of Balkan Romance therefore offer Romance and theoretical linguists a privileged opportunity to deepen and further our understanding of the role and interaction of different types of parameter in endogenous and exogenous change. Although the contributions in this Special Issue represent an important advancement in

our understanding of Balkan Romance microvariation in the nominal and clausal domains, much more work undoubtedly remains to be carried out; the full extent of comparative diachronic and synchronic variation in this area is truly vast, and it is imperative that future researchers focus on this understudied domain of variation to reveal its true potential. Against this backdrop, we hope that this Special Issue will provide the impetus for new generations of researchers to initiate new lines of research on Balkan Romance.

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Notes

- ¹ According to Joseph (2020, p. 539), “a *sprachbund* can be defined as any group of languages that due to intense and sustained multilingual contact share linguistic features, largely structural in nature but possibly lexical as well, that are not the result of shared inheritance from a common ancestor nor a matter of independent innovation in each of the languages involved”.
- ² This map is in the public domain at: <https://cersipamantromanesc.wordpress.com/tag/dialectele-limbii-romane/> (accessed 19 December 2024).
- ³ Non-genuine VSO arises from V-to-C movement which places the verb higher than the subject raised to SpecTP as in, for example, Irish.
- ⁴ Map in the public domain at https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Grecia (accessed 19 December 2024).
- ⁵ For the more complex distribution of perfective auxiliaries found in Griko and Salentino, see Ledgeway et al. (submitted, Chapter 6).

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