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## ALBANIAN DIALECT CLASSIFICATIONS

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### Abstract

This paper provides a historical overview of Albanian dialect classifications. Based on traditional linguistics, Gjinari (1963) has figured out 2 dialects, 4 groups of subvarietys and 6 subdialects, whereas in 1966, he distinguished 2 dialects, 4 subdialects and 6 groups of subvarietys. This classification was followed by Shkurtaj (2012), who expanded the number of subvariety groups to thirteen. Desnickaja (1968) distinguished two dialect regions, 5 dialect areas, 7 groups of subvariety regions and 44 subvarietys. In the *ADGjSh* (1990–2007) two major group divisions are distinguished: Gegëri and Toskëri, and further subdivisions: Kosovë, Myzeqe, Labëri, Çamëri. Beci (2002) distinguished two main dialects: Gheg in the North and Tosk in the South, as well as three smaller dialect units in Gheg and two smaller dialect units in Tosk Albanian; in 2016 he reclassified Albanian dialects again in 2 dialect regions, depending only on the presence or absence of specific dialect phenomena.

**Keywords:** dialect classification, isoglottic dialectology, Albanian

**Name:** shqipja [ʃcipja] / gjuha shqipe [ˈjuha ˈʃcipe]) **Language-code:** ISO 639-1 sq, ISO 639-2 alb, sqi

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## CLASSIFICACIONS DIALECTALS DEL ALBANÈS

### Resum

Aquest article ofereix una visió històrica de les classificacions dialectals albaneses. A partir de la lingüística tradicional, Gjinari (1963) describí dos dialectes, quatre grups de subvarietats i sis subdialectes, mentre que el 1966, va distingir dos dialectes, quatre subdialectes i sis grups de subvarietats. Aquesta classificació va ser adoptada per Shkurtaj (2012), que va ampliar el nombre de grups de subvarietats a tretze. Desnickaja (1968) va distingir dues regions dialectals, cinc àrees dialectals, set grups de regions de subvarietat i 44 subvarietats. A l'ADGjSh (1990–2007) es distingeixen dues grans divisions: Gegëri i Toskëri, i altres subdivisions: Kosovë, Myzeqe, Labëri i Çamëri. Beci (2002) va distingir dos dialectes principals: el gheg, al nord, i el tosk, al sud, com també tres unitats dialectals més petites en gheg i dues unitats dialectals més petites en tosk; el 2016 va reclassificar els dialectes albanesos novament en dues regions dialectals, segons la presència o l'absència de fenòmens dialectals específics.

**Paraules clau:** classificació dialectal, dialectologia isoglòtica, albanès

## KLASIFIKIMET E DIALEKTEVE TË SHQIPES

### Abstrakt

Ky kapitull ofron një historik të klasifikimeve të dialekteve të shqipes. Bazuar në gjuhësinë tradicionale, Gjinari (1963) ka dalluar 2 dialekte, 4 grupe të folmesh dhe 6 nëndialekte, ndërsa në vitin 1966 dallon 2 dialekte, 4 nëndialekte dhe 6 grupe të folmesh. Shkurtaj (2012) ndoqi këtë klasifikim dhe e zgjeroi numrin e grupeve të të folmeve në trembëdhjetë. Desnickaja (1968) dallon 2 krahina dhe 5 zona dialektore, 7 grupe e rajone të folmesh dhe 44 të folme. Në ADGjSh (1990–2007) jepen dy grupe të mëdha: Gegëria e Toskëria, si dhe nënndarjet Kosovë, Myzeqe, Labëri, Çamëri. Beci (2002) identifikon dy dialekte kryesore: Gegë në Veri dhe Toskë në Jug, si dhe tri njësi dialektore më të vogla në gegërishte dhe dy njësi dialektore më të vogla në toskërishte; në vitin 2016 i riklasifikoi dialektet e shqipes në 2 krahina dialektore, bazuar në praninë ose mungesën e tipareve të veçanta dialektore.

**Fjalë kyçe:** Klasifikimi i dialekteve, Dialektologjia izoglotike, Gjuha shqipe

## 1. Introduction

Today the Albanian language is spoken by more than seven million people in the Republic of Albania (Map 1), in the Republic of Kosovo, in the western and northwestern part of the Republic of North Macedonia, in some municipalities in the southeastern part of the Republic of Montenegro, in the municipalities of Preshevë, Bujanoc and Medvegje (Republic of Serbia), in some area of Greece (Chameria, etc.), in the old Albanian settlements of Italy, Greece, Ukraine, Bulgaria, etc., as well as in Albanian communities in different countries of the world.



Map 1. The territory of Albania and the border countries. (Source: <https://cdn.britannica.com/03/6203-050-7719C51A/Albania-map-boundaries-cities-locator.jpg>)

The Albanian language belongs to the Indo-European family; it fits to a separate branch in this family, and it is not close to any of the Indo-European languages. An important part of the lexicon and the basic elements of the grammatical structure of Albanian are inherited from an ancient period on which are found analogies and coincidences in other Indo-European languages, but there are acquired many innovations on Albanian grammatical structure and lexicon during its historical evolution.

Albanian is written on Latin alphabet, and it has 36 letters: 29 consonants and 7 vowels.

The origin of the Albanian language is still a problem as it cannot be clarified definitively, however there are two main theses: the Illyrian and the Thracian thesis. The most argued about historically and linguistically is the thesis according to which

Albanians are descendants of the Illyrians and the Albanian language is descendant of Illyrian language. This thesis is based on a group of historical and linguistic arguments (*Fjalori enciklopedik shqiptar* 2008: 860-861).

The creation of literary Albanian language and its standardization is the result of a long and complex process, which began with the first Albanian writings, entered a new stage in time of the National Renaissance and reached the completion and highest level in the second half of the 20th century.

The standard Albanian which is called also the literary Albanian is the most elaborated and developed variety of the Albanian language. It includes the formal language of official and social activities, academic and educational publications, press and journalism, most of the Albanian artistic literature and literary translations, etc.

Since the first old writings, the Albanian language appeared in two main literary varieties, which were based on two dialects. There have been many efforts to approach these varieties continuously. The unification of language literary continued during the Renaissance; they were intensified especially by the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, when two important and immediate tasks were set: alphabet unification and spelling unification (*Fjalori enciklopedik shqiptar* 2008: 858-859).

There are two dialects of Albanian language: the northern dialect or Gheg and the southern dialect or Tosk (Map 2). The Shkumbin river is taken as the physical border between these two dialects. Gheg lies to its right, whereas Tosk lies to its left. The names Gheg and Tosk originate from the names Gegëri and Toskëri, which were finalized or accepted officially in the 19th century. Some of the subvarieties of the northern dialect extend to the Albanian territories outside the borders of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Kosovo: in Montenegro (Ulqin, Krajë, Tuz, Hot e Grudë, Triesh, Plavë e Guci); in Southern Serbia (in the province of Peshter near Novi Pazar, Jabllanicë, Bujanoc, Preshevë) and in the Republic of North Macedonia (Kumanovë, Mali i Zi i Shkupit, Shkup, Tetovë, Gostivar, Dibër, Krushevë, Kërçovë, etc.). Also, some subvarieties of the Southern dialect continue to extend beyond the borders: in North Macedonia (Strugë, Ohër - Ohrid, Manastir - Bitola, Resnjë - Resen) and in Greece (Çamëri - Chameria, etc.). Only the subvariety of *Arbënesht* from the dialects of the

Albanian diaspora is related to the Northern dialect, while all the others are related to the dialect of the South (the dialects of the Arbëresh of Italy, those of the Arbëresh of Greece, the dialect of Mandrica in Bulgaria and that of the Albanians of Ukrainian on the shores of the Azov Sea). (*Fjalori enciklopedik shqiptar*, 2008: 464-465).



Map 2. The actual territory of the Albanian language (Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21986357>)

Based on the fact that the writing of Albanian language is late (the first document of written Albanian is *Formula e pagëzimit (The Baptismal Formula)*, 1462, dialectological studies of it are especially important, as the importance of dialectological data is greater. Dialect units have preserved words and forms of the historical past that are no longer found in the written language, or they are found only in old texts.

There have been efforts to classify Albanian dialects since on ancient times. Their study began in 1854 with the work of J. G. Hahn *Studime shqiptare* (Albanian Studies) and continue until this day, but they were developed and concluded on final decisions only around the 1950s. This process has gone through two phases: the first phase includes the period up to 1944, and the second phase the period after 1944.

During the first phase, the knowledge of the spoken forms of Albanian language in the Balkan lands was made through articles and grammars of the Albanian language based on dialect and was initially related to scholars: Hahn 1854; Camarda 1864; Kristoforidhi 1982; Pekmezi 1908; Weigand 1913; Lambertz 1948, 1959; Sheperi 1943; Rrota 1942, 1943, etc. (Beci 2016: 307).

Few dialectological studies were carried out before 1945 and they provide only partial data and cover a small part of the area of the dialect varieties in the Balkans. During the period after 1944 and more specifically in the 1950s, a systematic and organized work began for the collection of dialect materials and for the study of Albanian subvarieties within the territory of Albania.

The origin of the study of the distinctive features of the two Albanian dialects begins with the analysis that Hahn made in 1854 in the chapter “Këmbimi i tingujve” (Exchange of sounds), in which the author looked at the linguistic material from the perspective of territorial extension, to arrive at the identification of 20 linguistic distinctive features of Albanian dialects (Hahn 2007: 6-24).

The first classification of Albanian dialects in the post-war period was made by J. Gjinari in 1963, in the first version of the text of Albanian dialectology. The major principle of Albanian dialectology and especially of linguistic geography is the meaning of dialect as a historical category that develops close connection with the history of society simultaneously, as well as with the comprehension of dialect language not as a collection of dialects, but as a separate complex system that includes its composition common elements, which belong to the language as a whole, as well as special distinctive elements, related to specific territories (Gjinari 2015: 210).

There are several linguistic features that have been taken in consideration to distinguish the dialect units of Albanian. Some of them are considered as absolute distinct features, because they lie on one or the other dialect unit, while some others

are relative or restricted, because they are used in smaller divisions of both dialect units.

Most scholars of the Albanian dialects have accepted some distinctive features of the two Albanian dialects, which belong to different linguistic levels, whether phonetic, morphological, and syntactic, as well as lexical, which are more numerous (see tables 1, 2, 3 and 4).

Nr.	Phonetic features	Examples		
		Gheg	Tosk	English
1.	Presence or best preservation of long vowels in the Northern dialect	<i>kōh</i> <i>dīt</i> , etc.	<i>Kohë</i> <i>ditë</i> , etc.	<i>time</i> <i>day</i> etc.
2.	Presence of stressed nasal vowels in the Northern dialect and their absence in the Southern dialect	<i>zã, zãni</i> <i>shkãm, shkãmi</i> <i>hĩ, hĩni</i> <i>drũ, drũni</i> , etc.	<i>zë, zëri</i> <i>shkëmb,</i> <i>shkëmbi</i> <i>hi, hiri</i> <i>dru, druri</i> , etc.	<i>voice</i> <i>rock</i> <i>ash</i> <i>wood</i> etc.
3.	Presence of the vowel <i>ë</i> in the Southern dialect, to which corresponds the nasal <i>ã</i> in the Northern dialect	<i>ãsh</i> , <i>bãj</i> , etc.	<i>Ësh</i> <i>të</i> <i>bëj</i> , etc.	<i>to be</i> <i>to do</i> etc.
4.	Presence of vowel groups <i>ua</i> , <i>ye</i> , <i>ie</i> in the Southern dialect and their reduction to <i>u</i> (< <i>ue</i> ), <i>y</i> (< <i>ye</i> ), <i>i</i> (< <i>ie</i> ) in the Northern dialect	<i>grue, gru</i> <i>muej</i> <i>dy:r</i> <i>kry</i> <i>fyll</i> <i>bi:m</i> , etc.	<i>grua</i> <i>muaj</i> <i>dyer</i> <i>krye</i> <i>fyell</i> <i>biem</i> , etc.	<i>woman</i> <i>month</i> <i>doors</i> <i>head</i> <i>flute</i> <i>to fall</i> , etc.
5.	Disappearance or frequent reduction of the unstressed vowel <i>ë</i> in the Northern dialect	<i>buk ose bu:k</i> <i>ma:sh</i> <i>rrath</i> <i>lopt</i> <i>ba:bs</i> , etc.	<i>bukë</i> <i>mashë</i> <i>rrathët</i> <i>lopët</i> <i>babës</i> , etc.	<i>bread</i> <i>tong</i> <i>circle</i> <i>cow</i> <i>father</i> , etc.

Table 1. Phonetic features of the vowel system of the two Albanian dialects

Nr.	Phonetic features	Example		
		Gheg	Tosk	English
1.	Preservation of the consonant groups <i>mb-</i> , <i>nd-</i> in the Southern dialect and the alternate sound change of these groups, respectively only in the nasal <i>m-</i> , <i>n-</i> in the front position in the Northern dialect.	<i>krimi</i> <i>mollëm</i> <i>mreti</i> <i>mush</i> <i>nal</i> <i>knoj</i> <i>tun</i> , etc.	<i>krimbi</i> <i>mbollëm</i> <i>mbreti</i> <i>mbush</i> <i>ndal</i> <i>këndoj</i> <i>tund</i> , etc.	<i>worm</i> <i>to sow</i> <i>king</i> <i>to fill</i> <i>to stop</i> <i>to sing</i> <i>to shake</i> , etc.
2.	Preservation of <i>h</i> in the end of the word in the Southern dialect and its transition to <i>f</i> , especially in the end position, in the Northern dialect	<i>njof</i> <i>i ftoft</i> <i>i ngroft</i> <i>lef</i> <i>shof</i> , etc.	<i>njoh</i> <i>i ftohtë</i> <i>i ngrohtë</i> <i>leh</i> <i>shoh</i> , etc.	<i>know</i> <i>cold</i> <i>warm</i> <i>bark</i> <i>see</i> , etc.
3.	The presence in the Northern dialect of the <i>phonetic group</i> <i>vo-</i> at the beginning of a few words, which is <i>va-</i> in the Southern dialect	<i>votër</i> <i>voj</i> <i>vorr</i> <i>i vorfën</i> <i>i vokët</i> , etc.	<i>vatër</i> <i>vaj</i> <i>varr</i> <i>i varfër</i> <i>i vakët</i> , etc.	<i>hearth</i> <i>oil</i> <i>grave</i> <i>poor</i> <i>warm</i> , etc.
4.	The devoicing of the voiced consonants at the end of the word in the Southern dialect and preserving them in the Northern dialect	<i>i lik</i> <i>zok</i> <i>elp</i> <i>prak</i> <i>i math</i> <i>vik</i> , etc.	<i>i lig</i> <i>zog</i> <i>elb</i> <i>prag</i> <i>i madh</i> <i>vig</i> , etc.	<i>wicked</i> <i>bird</i> <i>barley</i> <i>sill</i> <i>big</i> <i>litter</i> , etc.
5.	Change of the consonant <i>nj</i> to <i>j</i> in the Northern dialect and the preservation of <i>nj</i> in the Southern dialect	<i>shkopij</i> <i>ullij</i> <i>thoj</i> <i>huj</i> <i>brija</i> <i>zoja</i> , etc.	<i>shkopinj</i> <i>ullinj</i> <i>thonj</i> <i>hunj</i> <i>brinja</i> <i>zonja</i> , etc.	<i>chopsticks</i> <i>olive</i> <i>finger nail</i> <i>stake</i> <i>rib</i> <i>lady</i> , etc.
6.	The presence of the phenomenon of rhoticism in the Southern dialect and its absence in the Northern dialect: the nasal <i>n</i> in the intervocalic position in Gheg is often changed to the rhotic <i>r</i> in Tosk.	<i>lakën</i> <i>hapun</i> <i>vena</i> <i>hyna</i> <i>emën</i> , etc.	<i>lakër</i> <i>hapur</i> <i>vera</i> <i>hyra</i> <i>emër</i> , etc.	<i>cabbage</i> <i>to open</i> <i>wine</i> <i>to enter</i> <i>name</i> , etc.

Table 2. Phonetic features of the consonant system of the two Albanian dialects



Nr.	Grammatical features	Example		
		Gheg	Tosk	English
1.	Presence of the infinitive <i>me punue</i> in the Northern dialect and its absence in the Southern dialect.	<i>me këndue</i>	-	<i>to sing</i>
2.	Forming the future of the Indicative mood by the auxiliary verb <i>kam</i> + <i>infinitive</i> in the Northern dialect (according to Desnickaja the future of the Western European type), and by the participle <i>do</i> + <i>the present tense of the subjunctive mood</i> in the Southern dialect (according to Desnickaja <i>the future of the Balkan type</i> ).	<i>kam me ardhë kam me folë,</i> etc.	<i>do të vij do të flas,</i> etc.	<i>I will come I will speak etc.</i>
3.	Use of the sigmatic imperfect (with <i>-sh</i> ) in the Gheg dialect.	<i>punojshe këputshim merrshit,</i> etc.	<i>punoje këputnim merrnit,</i> etc.	<i>to work to pluck to get,</i> etc.
4.	The short participle of verbs in Gheg.	<i>li:dh ha:p punue vra fshi fje:t,</i> etc.	<i>lidhur hapur punuar vrarë fshirë fjetur,</i> etc.	<i>to link to open to work kill rub sleep,</i> etc

Table 3. Grammatical features of the two Albanian dialects

Gheg	Tosk	English
<i>kallamboq, kollomoq</i>	<i>misër</i>	<i>maize</i>
<i>ferrë</i>	<i>gjemb</i>	<i>blackthorn</i>
<i>kërtollë (kërtolle), kompir (kumpir, kampir)</i>	<i>patate</i>	<i>potato</i>
<i>tāmël</i>	<i>qumësht</i>	<i>milk</i>
<i>thi</i>	<i>derr</i>	<i>pig</i>
<i>cinxër</i>	<i>gjinkallë</i>	<i>cicada</i>
<i>çfurk</i>	<i>akrep</i>	<i>pointer</i>
<i>çi:k, cu:c, go:c</i>	<i>vajzë</i>	<i>girl</i>
<i>krye, kaptinë</i>	<i>kokë</i>	<i>head</i>
<i>çel</i>	<i>hap</i>	<i>step</i>
<i>tëlyen</i>	<i>gjalpë</i>	<i>butter</i>

<i>konop</i>	<i>litar</i>	<i>ropes</i>
<i>saki:c</i>	<i>sëpatë</i>	<i>Ax</i>
<i>katërdhet</i>	<i>dyzet</i>	<i>forty</i>
<i>zdryp</i>	<i>zbres</i>	<i>subtract</i>
<i>vadit, potis</i>	<i>ujit</i>	<i>water</i>
<i>ndërroj</i>	<i>këmbej</i>	<i>exchange</i>
<i>kaçamill</i>	<i>kërmill</i>	<i>snail</i>
<i>çerdhe</i>	<i>fole</i>	<i>nest</i>
<i>bukël</i>	<i>nuselale</i>	<i>weasel</i>

Table 4. Some lexical differences of the two Albanian dialects

## 2. Classifications

This section contains the different classifications of the Albanian dialects that have been proposed by various scholars over the years. J. Gjinari's 1963 classification of Gheg and Tosk dialects, along with transitional subvarieties, laid the foundation for subsequent research. A.V. Desnickaja in 1968 used the Shkumbin river as a dividing line between these dialect regions. The Dialectological Atlas of the Albanian Language, published in 1990/2007, utilized linguistic geography to map dialectal features across Albanian-speaking territories. Bahri Beci (2005, 2016) challenged the traditional division and introduced new terminology, emphasizing the presence or absence of specific dialect phenomena.

These classifications serve as evidence, showing how scholars' perspectives have evolved over time as they attempt to uncover the nuances and variations of the Albanian language in different regions.

### 2.1 Jorgji Gjinari (1963, 1965)

Despite the early efforts for the dialect classification of Albanian, since the middle of the 19th century, the definition of Albanian dialect units in the post-war period was made for the first time by J. Gjinari in 1963, in the first version of the *Albanian dialectology* book (Gjinari 1963). He continued with the same classification in

the next edition of the *Albanian dialectology* in 1965. The classification of Gjinari has been the foundation of further studies, not only of the same author, but also of other dialectologists in subsequent studies.

#### 2.1.1 Framework: Isoglottic dialectology

Traditional methods have been applied in the description and classification of dialect phenomena in *Albanian dialectology*, published in 1963. Gjinari undertook a series of expeditions and recorded linguistic data for different Albanian subvarieties by collecting and verifying on the sites the collected facts. All data have been saved in a database which has been used for detailed analysis, and has enabled the segmentation of units, the classification of dialect varieties and subvarieties, the identification of common and distinctive linguistic features between these varieties, etc.

#### 2.1.2 Classification of dialects and subdialects

In the 1963 version of the *Albanian dialectology*, J. Gjinari states that within the Albanian language there are two large units, which are the northern dialect and the southern dialect or Gheg and Tosk. These two dialects are generally separated by the Shkumbin river, but there is also a group of transitional subvarieties between them. Groups and subgroups of dialects are distinguished in each of these subvarieties.

In general, considering the Vjosa river as a geographical point of reference, the author divides the southern dialect into two major groups:

- 1) the subvarieties located on the left side of the Vjosa river,
- 2) the subvarieties located on the right side of the Vjosa river.

Despite the closeness of the southern dialects, the author still differs in Tosk Albanian:

- 1) Northern Tosk Albanian, which extends to all the northern areas of Toskëri, to those located on the right side of the Vjosa river;

2) Cham, which starts from the Shalës river and enters Greece (Chameria) and lies to the Bay of Preveza;

3) Lab, which includes Labëria, the Sea Coast and Gjirokastra with districts; Vjosa river separates it from the northern Tosk Albanian, while the Shalësi river separates it from Chamerisht.

The author also makes some smaller divisions within the northern Tosk Albanian:

- 1) the group of eastern subvariety,
- 2) the group of western subvariety,
- 3) the southeast group,
- 4) the southern group.

In 1965, Gjinari distinguished two groups within the northern Tosk (one of the three sub-dialects of the southern dialect):

- 1) the group of subvariety on the western side (Myzeqe, Berat, Mallakastër, Skrapar and Vlora with surroundings),
- 2) the group of subvariety on the east side (most of the region of Korça: Opar, Gore, Pogradec, Fusha e Korçës, Devolli).

According to Gjinari, the northern dialect is more fragmented compared to the southern one. In general, he divides subvarieties of this dialect into two large groups, based on the reference point at the flow of the Mati River:

- 1) the northern group,
- 2) the southern group.

Considering the fact that the data of dialectology has not been sufficient yet, the author has made this division for northern Gheg (Figure 1):

- 1) the subdialect of northwestern Gheg (Shkodër, Zadrimë, Malësi e Madhe, Dukagjin and Mirditë, although as “transitional subvarieties”),
- 2) the northeastern Gheg subdialect (Tropoja district, Has, Kukës, Kosovo),
- 3) the subdialect of southern Gheg (areas from Mati to Shkumbin river).

In the subdialect of southern Gheg, he distinguishes:

- 1) the group of the -f diphthong subvarieties,
- 2) the Elbasan district group,

3) the group of Tirana, Durrës, Rrogozhina, Peqin (Gjinari 1963: 73-74).

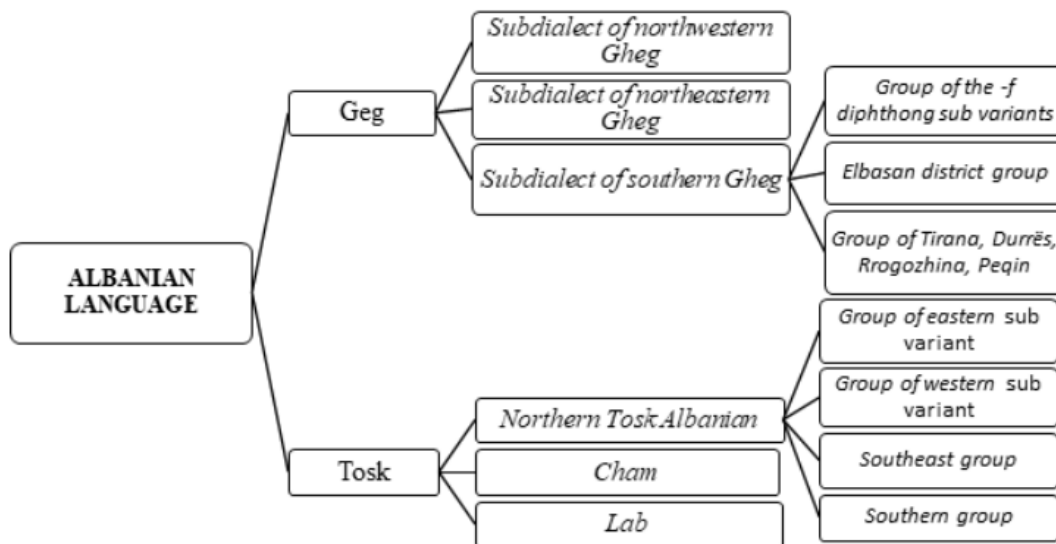


Figure 1. Dialects of Albanian

## 2.2 Jorgji Gjinari (1966)

In 1966, Jorgji Gjinari presented another overview of Albanian dialect units which were different from the classification in 1963, 1965.

Gjinari has preserved this classification even later in the other editions of dialectology published in different years as a sole author or in co-authorship with Gj. Shkurtaj. (Gjinari 1969: 42-77, 1975: 35-50, 1988: 100-109, 1989: 39-57; Gjinari & Shkurtaj 1997: 175-187, 2013: 158-163).

### 2.2.1 Framework: Isoglottic dialectology

J. Gjinari has applied the traditional method in the description and classification of dialect phenomena in the first editions of the *Albanian dialectology*, published in 1963, 1965, 1969, 1975. When republishing the *Albanian dialectology* (1988, 1989, 1997, 2000 – republished in 2003, 2009, 2013) he applied the functional and structural method for the description and classification of phonetic phenomena of Albanian

dialects. This method has also been applied to the treatment of morphological features in the version published in 1989.

### 2.2.2 Classification of dialects and subdialects

As Jorgji Gjinari affirms in his two previous works (1963, 1965), there are two dialects in the Albanian language, which are based on territorial point of view and separated by the Shkumbin river. On the right side of this river the northern dialect or Gheg is used, while on the left side the southern dialect or Tosk is used. The Shkumbin river is not a rigid border because there are transitional subvarieties along its left side.

The usage of the two dialects continue to extend beyond the borders of Albania. Tosk Albanian dialect is still used in Greece, in the province of Chameria, which reaches the bay of Preveza, extended on the sides of Prespa, Ohri and Struga, till to Manastir.

According to him, the Gheg dialect is extended to a large territory in (former) Yugoslavia. There are subvarieties of this dialect in the area between Struga and Dibra, Kërçova and Gostivari, on the sides of Krusheva and Prilepi, on the sides of T. Veles, in the whole valley of Vardar, from Gostivari to Shkupi, in Karadak of Skopje, on the sides of Kumanova, Presheva, in Peshter near Novipazar, in Plava and Gucia, on the sides of Tuzi, Kraja and Ulqin.

There are transitional subvarieties between the two dialects of Albanian which refer to an intermediate zone. They are used by the population living in a single strip along the left side of Shkumbini river, from Qafë Thana on the east to the river discharge of Shkumbin river to the seacoast on the west. This area includes Rajca, Bërzeshta, the province of Vërçë, Shpat, Polis, Sulova, Dumre, Darsi of Peqin, the Lower Coast of Kavaja and the northern part of the Lushnja lowlands.

The spoken forms of this region do not belong to a specific dialect because they have mixed features of both Tosk and Gheg dialects.

There are groups of varieties of spoken language in each dialect, which are based on the close connections between them, creating dialect units of different sizes. Each Albanian dialect is divided into two subdialects (Figure 2):

– in the Gheg dialect:

- 1) the Northern Gheg,
- 2) the Southern Gheg;
- the Tosk dialect:
  - 1) the Northern Tosk,
  - 2) the Southern Tosk.

Furthermore, Gjinari distinguishes several groups of subvarieties.

There are four subvarieties in the Gheg dialect:

- 1) the Northwestern Gheg,
- 2) the Northeastern Gheg,
- 3) the Central Gheg,
- 4) the Southern Gheg or Gheg of Central Albania.

There are large groups of subvarieties in the southern subdialect of the Tosk dialect:

- 1) the Lab,
- 2) the Cham.

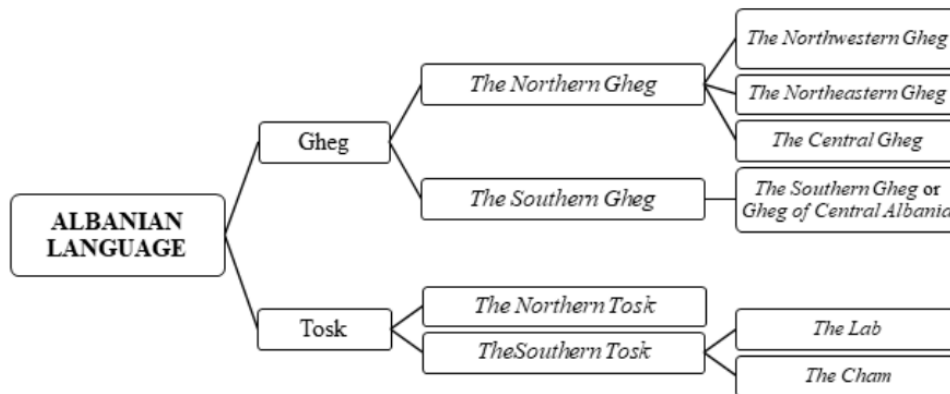


Figure 2. Dialects of Albanian language according to Gjinari

A similar classification has been made by Gj. Shkurtaj (2012). He affirms that there are two major branches in the Albanian language, which respond to the two divisions of the Albanian ethnicity on a territorial layout (Figure 3):

- 1) the Gheg or branch of Albanian lands, located in Northern Albania or in Gegëri,

2) the Tosk Albanian or the branch of Albanian lands that extend in Southern Albania or in Toskëri.

Gheg is divided into two subdialects:

- 1) Northern Gheg,
- 2) Southern Gheg.

Tosk is divided into two subdialects:

- 1) Northern Tosk,
- 2) Southern Tosk.

Shkurtaj distinguishes these groups of subvarieties in the Gheg dialect:

- 1) the Northwestern Gheg
- 2) the Northeastern Gheg
- 3) the Central Gheg
- 4) the Gheg of Central Albania
- 5) the subvariety of the Arbëresh of Zadar.

Shkurtaj distinguishes these groups of subvarieties in the Tosk dialect:

- 1) the North Tosk of the western part,
- 2) the Northern Tosk of the eastern part,
- 3) the Lab,
- 4) the Cham,
- 5) the subvarieties of the Arbëresh of Greece,
- 6) the subvarieties of the Arbëresh of Italy,
- 7) the subvarieties of Mandrica (Bulgaria),
- 8) the subvarieties of the Albanians of Ukraine.



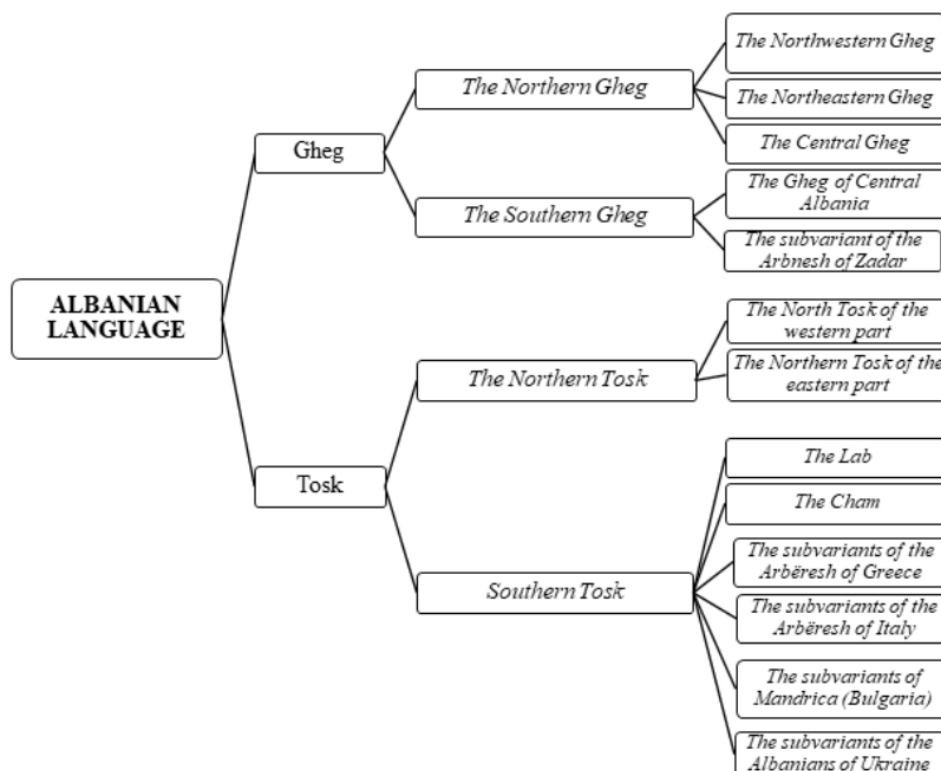


Figure 3. Classification of Albanian Dialects according to Shkurtaç

Regarding the grouping of the subvarieties of each dialect, it is noticed that Gj. Shkurtaç has also added the groups of the subvarieties of the Arbëresh of Zara, the Arbëresh of Greece, the Arbëresh of Italy, Mandrica (Bulgaria) and the Albanians of Ukraine.

### 2.3 A. V. Desnickaja (1968)

A. V. Desnickaja (1968) points out that the dialect as a distinctive feature is usually related to the ethnographic features of certain localities of the country, which are diverse and important for the life of Albanian people. According to her, the linguistic area of Albania is clearly divided into two large dialect regions: Gheg in the north and Tosk in the south. Like Gjinari, Desnickaja distinguishes an area of transitional subvarieties between them, in which, in various combinations, the features of the Gheg and Tosk dialects are presented.

She takes the flow of Shkumbin river from east to west as a criterion for the division of these two regions. The area of the subvarieties, which the researcher refers to as mixed and transitional subvarieties, lies on the left side of Shkumbin river and gradually merges with the one of the subvarieties of the Tosk province. These include the subvarieties of the northern part of the Myzeqe area, the provinces of Dumre, Sulovë, Verçë, Shpat, Polis, Bërzeshtë, Domosdovë. The major factors were the geographical position of the respective regions, the economic and administrative connections, the influence of the city centers (Elbasan, Peqin, Berat) and the movement and mixture of the population.

This territorial division corresponds to the linguistic division into Gheg and Tosk, with the subvariety of the Southern part and the subvariety of the Northern part. Desnickaja, instead of terms dialect, subdialect, subvarieties, prefers the terms dialect province or dialect area, subvarieties group or region and subvarieties when she discusses about the existence of dialects in separate Albanian territories compared to other European languages.

### 2.3.1 Framework: Isoglottic dialectology (Analysis and synthesis approach)

Desnickaja presents the classification according to the geographical criteria in the Gheg subvarieties of the north, east and south (or central Albania). This classification is more appropriate and well-accepted, although she is aware of the weak points, specifically the narrow meaning that they have acquired. (Northern Gheg is connected only with Shkodra, while southern Gheg with that of Elbasan, Tirana and Durrës).

She gives significant importance to the localization of the subvariety: in the mountainous region, in the fields and in the city. Based on these criteria, she proposes the distinction between the subvarieties of the mountainous provinces, the fields, and the cities. Religious affiliation has also been one of the crucial factors that has determined linguistic connections and differences within dialect areas (e.g., in Shkodra and Elbasan).

### 2.3.2 Classification of dialects and subdialects

Regarding to the conditions which have influenced the creation of the linguistic map of Albania, Desnickaja adds that its specific is largely determined by a complicated conglomeration of forms of linguistic communication, which are related to the common social and economic living conditions for a long time. The old kinship relations with their special types of subvarieties and the union of territorial character, which have entered the conditions of feudal order, abandonment of livestock and the growth of cities, which are centers of economic inclination for large areas of agriculture, are all these factors which have determined the processes of dialect development in the relatively small territory, but diverse in terms of natural conditions.

The author emphasizes that the most unified character of the dialect type in Southern Albania is linked with historical, geographical and economic reasons.

The principal areas, created due to the geographical division of the territory of southern Albania, are the one of northwest, northeast and south. The north-western and north-eastern areas have a considerable number of common phenomena, while the southern area preserves to a larger extent to the special archaic qualities, which at the same time is the province of the origin of some innovations, which are partially spread also towards the north.

Desnickaja makes this classification for the Albanian language (Figure 4):

1) Gheg dialect province of Northern Albania:

– the dialect area of North Gheg:

– the Northwestern group of Gheg subvarieties:

– the subvarieties of Malësia e Madhe,

– the subvariety of Kraja,

– the subvarieties of Dukagjini,

– the subvarieties of the flat provinces of northwestern Albania,

– the subvarieties of Shkodra;

– the Northeastern group of *Gheg* subvarieties:

- the subvarieties of the eastern part of the united Drini basin,
- the subvariety of the province Nikaj and Mertur,
- the subvariety of Tropoja (of the provinces Krasniqe, Gash, Bytyç),
- the subvariety of Kosovë and Metohi;
- the dialect area of middle Gheg:
  - the subvariety of Mati,
  - the subvarieties of the mountainous provinces that join the province of Mat from the south and west,
    - the subvariety of Kruja,
    - the subvariety of Mirdita,
    - the subvarieties of the mountainous province's northeast of Mat,
    - the subvariety of Lura,
    - the subvariety of Dibra,
    - the subvariety of Luma,
    - the Gheg subvarieties of Macedonia;
- the dialect area of South Gheg:
  - the subvariety of Elbasan, one of the bases of the popular conversational *Gheg* koine of the South,
    - the subvariety of old Tirana,
    - the other subvarieties of the South Gheg area,
    - the subvariety of the province of Peqin.

## 2) Tosk dialect region of Southern Albanian:

- the Northern Tosk dialect area:
  - the Northwest region:
    - the subvariety of Berat,
    - the subvariety of Skrapar,
    - the subvariety of Mallakasta,
    - the subvariety of the lower part of the province of Myzeqe,
    - the subvariety of Vlora and its relative region;
  - the Northeast region:
    - the subvariety of Opar,

- the subvarieties of the other mountainous provinces of northeastern Tosk,
- the subvariety of Devoll,
- the mixed subvariety of the inhabitants of the Korça plain,
- the subvariety of the city of Korça;
- the Southeast region;
- Middle Vjosa dialect region;
- the Southern Tosk dialect area:
  - the Labëria subvarieties region:
    - the subvarieties of the mountainous provinces in east of the Drinos valley:
      - the subvariety of the province of Zagoria;
    - the subvarieties of Labëria:
      - the subvariety of Bregdeti i Poshtëm;
    - the subvarieties of Vurg of Delvina:
      - the subvariety of Muzina,
      - the subvariety of Gjirokastra;
    - the subvariety of Çameria.

### 3) Transitional subvarieties

An important group in this study are the Tosk subvarieties of the Albanian settlements of Greece, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Italy, namely:

- the Albanian subvariety in the territory of central and southern Greece,
- the subvariety of the village of Mandrica in Bulgaria,
- the subvariety of the Albanian settlements of Ukraine,
- the subvariety of the Albanian settlements of Italy.

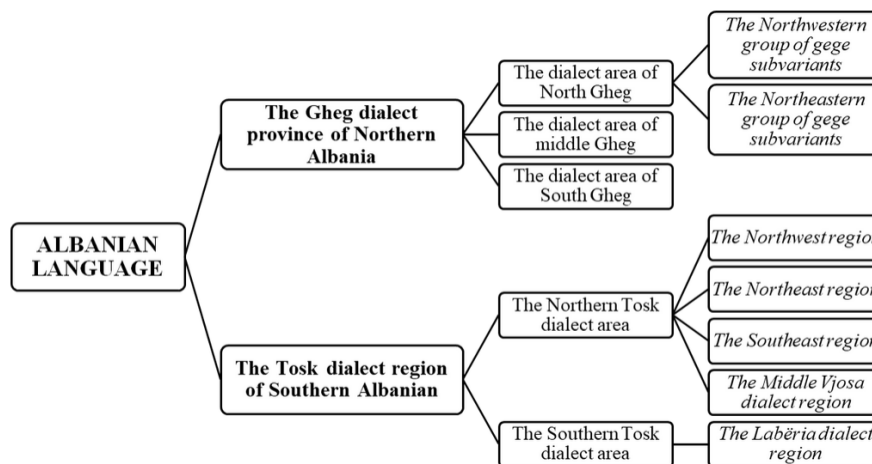


Figure 4. Classification of Albanian dialects according to Desnickaja

#### 2.4 *The Dialectological Atlas of the Albanian Language (ADGjSh – Atlasi dialektologjik i gjuhës shqipe, 1990/2007)*

ADGjSh is one of the basic studies of Albanian linguistics that studies the dialects of the Albanian language with the method of linguistic geography. The atlas was completed in 1990 (the survey work was conducted during 1980-1985) and it reflects the state of dialect research to date, despite being published in 2007.

The atlas intends to trace all areas of language systematically, with the aim of giving a complete overview not only of lexical variants, but also of phonetic and grammatical variants in the two Albanian dialects, through specific questions.

The questionnaire, designed by a group of linguists, was completed based on the subjective criteria of natural speakers, that is, people without specific linguistic knowledge.

The atlas aimed to include points from all the main areas where the Albanian language is spoken: Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia (today North Macedonia), Montenegro, Peshteri near Novi Pazar, Jabllanicë, Preshevë, Albanian speaking territories in northwestern Greece – Çamëria (Chameria), in the settlements of the Albanian diaspora in Southern Italy and Greece, the dialects of Zara (Zadar) in Dalmatia.

Based on the geographical and linguistic criteria, 175 inhabited points were assigned, distributed as such: 85 in Albania, 66 in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Peshteri near Novi Pazar, Jabllanicë, Preshevë, 5 points in Greece – Çamëria (Chameria) and 19 points in the dialects of the Arbëresh diaspora (in Italy, Greece and Dalmatia). The network points in the territory of Albania have an average of approximately 17 km away from each other.

#### 2.4.1 Framework: Isoglottic dialectology

This atlas is a study of dialects through the method of mapping. It gives the extent of different linguistic phenomena throughout the Albanian language. The used maps are of two types: explanatory maps (which have the word written at every point on the map and are generally lexical maps), and non-explanatory maps (where the dialect variant is represented by corresponding symbols).

Distinctive dialect features are presented in a comparative plan. Dialects, which are treated as a form of common language with limited usage from a territorial and social point of view, are seen in synchronic levels.

Dialects are conceived as a complex entire unit with the systems of different degrees that are included in it, with dialects and other smaller units, up to the system of a subvariety.

The Atlas does not include the features in common of the language and based on the comparative feature, the maps provide the differences of the dialects. The national literary language serves as a starting point to compare the dialects. This is the way in which the comparison between the subvarieties themselves, and the subvarieties and the literary language is made.

The common features of the national language, those which are the same for both literary language and dialects are excluded from the comparison, as well as the elements that do not exist in any dialect and those ones the literary language has formed itself, such as e.g., terms of different fields, words that express general or abstract notions, etc.

The authors of the Atlas designed a questionnaire with 65 questions and 107 subquestions about phonetics: with 80 questions and 80 subquestions about syntax and morphology and with 9 questions about syntax. The results obtained from the questionnaire in different points of the Albanian speaking areas highlighted some differences:

1) structural differences:

– inventory differences of grammatical categories and inventory of forms of a paradigm,

– differences of structure variants (form variants and morpheme variants);

2) nonstructural differences:

– differences in the distribution of morphemes' variants,

– differences of endings' variants.

#### 2.4.2 Classification of dialects and subdialects

According to the provincial map presented in the Atlas, there are two major divisions: Gegëri and Toskëri, and further subdivisions: Kosovë, Myzeqe, Labëri, Çamëri (Map 3).

The respective names are given on the map, each of the 175 points that have been collected during the work for this atlas.





### 2.5.1 Framework: Isoglottic dialectology

In the study of 2002, Bahri Beci aimed to figure out the problems related to the history, culture, and language of the Albanian people and, especially, those related to the age and autochthony of the Albanians in their actual Balkan territories referring to the latest data of historical dialectology.

According to him, historical facts have not been researched sufficiently so far, because most scholars have preserved the viewpoint that the dialects of the Albanian language are new or relatively new but have not brought enough data to support their opinion.

He adds that the historical relationship of Albanian dialects is important to determine the age of Albanian settlements in their present territories, as well as to know the history of Albanian relations with other Balkan languages.

### 2.5.2 Classification of dialects and subdialects

According to Beci, the Albanian language has two main dialects, Gheg in the North and Tosk in the South (see Figure 5).

Dialect of the North or Gheg includes the subvarieties spoken in the territory of the Republic of Albania, from Shkumbin river to Vermosh in the North; and the Albanian subvarieties spoken in the southwestern part of present-day Montenegro (Ulqin with surroundings, Kraja, Vranja, Tuzi, Malësia e Podgoricës, Plava), in Kosovo, in present-day Southern Serbia (Preshevë, Bujanovc, Medvegjë) and in western part of present-day Northern Macedonia (Strugë, Ohër, Dibër, Kërçovë, Prilep, Tetovë, Gostivar, Shkup, Kumanovë).

Therefore, in addition to the subvarieties spoken within the territory of the Republic of Albania in the northern part of Shkumbin river, the subvarieties of Kosovo, the Albanian subvarieties in Macedonia, and in Montenegro as well as the subvarieties of Preshevë, Bujanovc and Medvegj in southern Serbia, belong to the Gheg dialect.

According to Beci, Gheg is divided into three smaller dialect units:

- 1) the Northern Gheg,

- 2) the Central Gheg,
- 3) the Southern Gheg.

The author gives no further explanation and makes no further division within southern Gheg, while he distinguished subgroups within northern and central Gheg. According to him, Northern Gheg is divided into two smaller dialect units:

- 1) the Western group, and
- 2) the Eastern group.

Central Gheg is also divided into two smaller dialect units:

- 1) the Western group, and
- 2) the Eastern group.

The Southern dialect or Tosk includes the subvarieties spoken in the territory of the Republic of Albania from Shkumbin river to Konispol in the south, the subvarieties of the area around Liqeni i Prespës (Lake Prespa) in the Western areas of Northern Macedonia and the Cham dialects in present-day northwestern Greece up to the bay of Preveza in the South.

Thus, in addition to the subvarieties which are used in the area that lie below Shkumbin river within the territory of the Republic of Albania, the subvarieties of Chameria in Greece and those that lie between Lake Ohrid and Prespa in present-day Macedonia, also belong to the dialect of the South or Tosk.

Tosk dialect is divided into two basic dialect units:

- 1) the Northern Tosk, and
- 2) the Southern Tosk.

Northern Tosk is divided into two basic groups:

- 1) the Western group, and
- 2) the Eastern group

Southern Tosk is divided into two smaller dialect units:

- 1) the Lab, and
- 2) the Cham.

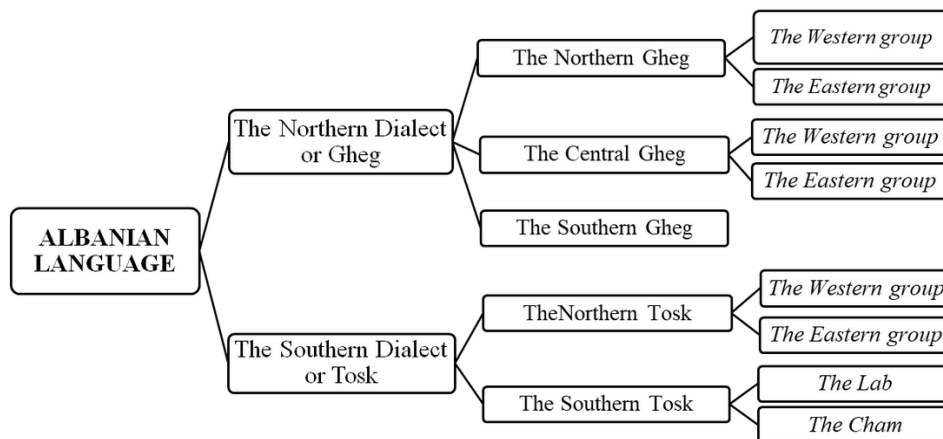


Figure 5. Classification of Albanian dialects according to Bahri Beci

As it is obvious, the *subvarieties* of Kosovo, of Medvegjë, Bujanoc and Preshevë in today's southern Serbia, the Albanian *subvarieties* of Northern Macedonia, Montenegro and Chameria in Greece which are located outside the present borders of the Republic of Albania, have followed the same path of development as the other *subvarieties* of Albanian. They participate directly in the dialect division of the Albanian language. This presents the uninterrupted connections in the historical process of their formation and development.

Albanian is also spoken in the Albanian settlements located in the Balkan territories, and beyond. These *subvarieties* of Albanian are presented as linguistic islands, long separated from the language of the motherland, and surrounded by other languages. This has defined their archaic character and mixed with the words and constructions of the surrounding languages. The way of development of these *subvarieties* as well as of other regions outside the Balkans, varies depending on the antiquity of their creation, on their size and compactness, as well as on the character and degree of relations with the populations that surround them.

In general, the *subvarieties* of the Albanian settlements in the Balkans, but also abroad, are characterized by the preservation of some archaic features inherited from the language of the motherland, and by some new phenomena acquired during their independent development in the new country or from the influence of the language of

the environment in which they are spoken. The total of these factors has determined the linguistic specificity of any Albanian settlement in the Balkans and beyond.

### *2.6 Bahri Beci (2016)*

His study about the dialect structure of Albanian in its compact Balkan territories is based on two main sources, on the data of dialect studies published until today for the subvarieties of Albanian, and on the data of the *Dialectological Atlas of the Albanian language* published in 2007.

According to Bahri Beci, the fundamental reason for the formation of dialect units and the emergence of specific linguistic characteristics of dialect units of a language is the presence, within the territory of that language unit, for a specific time, of political, economic, and cultural ties, which favors or supports the communication of the population of that territory and, consequently, the linguistic developments specific to it as well. Acceptance of this criteria as major reason of the formation of dialect units excludes a successive division in space and time of dialect Albanian from larger units (dialects) to smaller units (subdialects, groups of subvarieties, etc.). These criteria suggest to the author a dialect division of Albanian into independent dialect units depending only on the presence or absence of specific dialect phenomena.

The data on the territorial extension of Albanian dialect phenomena have dictated to the author the need for a reconceptualization of the division of Albanian dialects, different from the division accepted generally until today. As a result of this reconceptualization, which is different from its previous version, Bahri Beci gives up the naming of Albanian dialect units through the terms dialect, subdialect, group of subvarieties, and subvarieties and uses the terminology of A. V. Desnickaja, province dialects, dialect areas, dialect region and subvarieties to mark the lack of succession, i.e. division of dialects of Albanian as a whole in dialect regions and zones independently of each other.

### 2.6.1 Framework: Isoglottic dialectology

Through an analytical approach of dialect data, Bahri Beci presented his view on this issue by compiling general syntheses for the dialectology of the Albanian language published for Albanian subvarieties in the *Dialectological Atlas of the Albanian language* in 2007 for phonetic, grammatical, and lexical phenomena and critically scrutinizing the views for the dialect structure of Albanian.

The use of the territorial extension of dialect phenomena or distinctive features in the Balkan area of Albanian as a basic criterium, unlike previous studies, has led the author to accept for the first time a division of Albanian into non successive or independent dialect units, which he has named: dialect provinces, dialect areas, and dialect regions. Dialect regions are the largest units of Albanian.

### 2.6.2 Classification of dialects and subdialects

Considering the presence or territorial extension of specific phenomena or distinctive features in the Balkan area of Albanian language as a basic criterion, Bahri Beci managed to distinguish three types of independent dialect units: dialect provinces, dialect areas and dialect regions, thus avoiding what previous scholars considered a transitional area. According to the analyzed dialect phenomena, he ascertains and confirms the presence of two dialect provinces:

- 1) dialect province of the North, and
- 2) dialect province of the South.

The dialect province of the North generally lies on the right side of the Shkumbin river and includes: the subvarieties spoken in the territory of the Republic of Albania up to Vermosh; the Albanian subvarieties spoken in the southwestern part of present-day Montenegro, in Ulqin with districts, in Anë e Malit, in Krajë, in Tuz, in Malësia (which includes Trieshi, Hoti, Gruda and Kojë) and in Plavë and Guci; the subvarieties of Kosovo; Albanian subvarieties in present-day Southern Serbia, in Preshevë, Bujanoc and Medvedja and in present-day Western Macedonia, in Struga, Ohri, Dibër, Kërçovë, Prilep, Tetovë, Gostivar, Shkup, Kumanovë and on the sides of Prespa to Manastir. The

dialect province of the South lies, generally, on the left side of the Shkumbin river and includes the subvarieties spoken in the territory of the Republic of Albania up to Konispol in the South; the subvarieties of the province of Chameria in present-day northwestern Greece up to the bay of Preveza; the subvarieties that stretch from Prespa, Ohri and Struga to Manastir in northwestern Macedonia.

Dialect areas are those units which are smaller than the dialect regions of Albanian and can be extended to the spaces of each dialect region, but also to their common spaces. It is fundamental that even they, like the dialect provinces, have to do with the dialect division of Albanian in general, and not with the division of dialect regions, have their specific features that distinguish them as separate dialect units of Albanian in general. After analyzing the dialect phenomena of Albanian, the author points out that the definition of dialect areas is difficult, however he suggests this division:

1) the northern dialect area includes the northern subvarieties of Albania that lie to the north of the highway Vau i Dejës - Puka - Kukës, Drini i Bardhë, Sharr mountains and Mali i Zi of Shkupi;

2) the southern dialect area lies in the southern part of Albania, to the left of Vjosa river up to Preveza of present-day Greece, as well as in western Macedonia, specifically on the sides of Prespa, Ohri and Struga to Manastir;

3) the central dialect area lies below the highway Vau i Dejës - Puka - Kukës, Drini i Bardhë, Sharr mountains and Mali i Zi of Shkupi to the Vjosa river in the south. In addition to the subvarieties, spoken in the territory of Albania, there are also parts of the dialects spoken in the areas of Struga, Ohri, Dibra, Kërçova, Prilep, Tetovë, Gostivar, Shkup and Kumanovë, on the sides of Prespa to Manastir in today's Western Macedonia.

Dialect regions are smaller units that usually extend within the spaces of dialect provinces. It is fundamental that the dialect regions (such as dialect provinces and zones) are related to the dialect division of Albanian in general and not to the division of dialect regions or zones and have their specific features that distinguish them as

separate dialect units of Albanian in general. After observing and analyzing the dialect phenomena of Albanian, the author ascertains the presence of four dialect regions:

- 1) the Northwestern dialect region,
- 2) the Northeastern dialect region,
- 3) the Central dialect region, and
- 4) the Southern dialect region.

Northwestern dialect region includes subvarieties spoken in northwestern Albania that extend from Mati in the south to Plava and Guci in the north, from Ulqin and Tivari in the west to Nikaj-Mërtur in the east. Northwestern dialect region includes the subvarieties of Dukagjini, Malësia e Madhe, Rranzat e Mbishkodrës, Nënshkodra, as well as the subvarieties of Ulqin with surroundings, Ana e Malit, Rraja, Tivari i vjetër, Tuzi, Malësia (where Trieshi, Hoti, Gruda and Koja belong), and the subvarieties of Plava and Gucia in the southwestern part of present-day Montenegro.

Northeast dialect region includes subvarieties spoken in the northeastern part of Albania, near Novi Pazar and Leskovac in the north, to the Sharr Mountains in the south, from Shala and Shioishi in the west, to Medvegjë, Preshevë and Bujanoc in the east.

Central dialect region includes the subvarieties spoken in the central part of Northern Albania, lies in the area crossed by the Mat River and its tributaries, Fani i Madh and Fani i Vogël, by Drini i Zi, and the upper flow of the Vardar River.

According to Bahri Beci, a distinguished problem are the subvarieties that extend to the southern part of Albania, starting from the Shalës river to the Bay of Preveza in Greece. It refers to the subvarieties of Chameria. Considering that some special dialect phenomena have been proven, the author suggests its isolation as a separate dialect region, southern dialect region, but adds that the presence of this dialect region of Albanian will have to be discussed with concrete data of subvarieties at this territory.



### 3. Discussion

Despite the Albanian language is one of the ancient languages of the Balkans, it was verified on written documents quite late, in the 15th century, and consequently studies of it and especially genuine dialectological works have come later, compared to European dialectology. Albanian dialectology has its beginnings in the middle of the 19th century, but its full development as a science took place after 1944. Until the 1950s, the data for the Albanian dialects have been extracted from various publications, such as grammars, dictionaries, folklore texts etc. During this period, several genuine dialectological studies were conducted, mainly by foreign scholars, but they are few. There are partial data which cover a small part of the territory of the Albanian subvarieties in the Balkans.

After 1944, the study of Albanian dialects has been done mainly by Albanian linguists in an organized way, with an extensive programme, defined by the grammar and dialectology department of the Institute of History and Linguistics (*Fjalori enciklopedik shqiptar* 2008: 466).

In the classifications of Albanian language dialects, few theoretical frameworks have been used on which traditional (isoglottic) dialectology prevails. The classifications made for the Albanian dialects are based on linguistic criteria and are also reflected in geographical criteria. As the authors of the respective studies have expressed themselves, the presentation of their differences has been done mainly through the changes of linguistic features illustrated with the relevant examples, but also through their cartographic presentation.

What unites the different classifications of dialects and their subdivisions in the Albanian language is that even when there are changes in the terminology used, regularly, the divisions are made sequentially from larger units into smaller units.

Most dialectologists have accepted a successive dialect division of Albanian initially into dialects, dialects into subdialects, subdialects into groups of subvarieties, and so on. In his latest study, Bahri Beci does not see as justified such a successive division in the space of dialect Albanian, because it is not possible that the political,

economic and cultural ties that have favored the creation of dialect units of Albanian in certain territories have appeared or have been realized in succession, i.e. first in the territories of the two Albanian dialects, then in the territories of their subdialects and finally in the territories of the groups of subvarieties. He suggests a dialect division of Albanian into independent dialect units depending only on the presence or absence of specific dialect phenomena.

The same author accepted the terminology used, dialects, subdialects, groups of subvarieties, subvarieties, but later began to use the terms dialect province, dialect area, dialect region, and subvariety; a terminology previously encountered by A. V. Desnickaja. But unlike this researcher, he uses these terms not to mark the successive division of dialect units from larger units to smaller units, but on the contrary, the absence of succession, i.e., the division of Albanian dialects as a whole into dialect regions, in dialect areas and regions independently of each other.

Jorgji Gjinari has opposed the opinion of Bahri Beci and A. V. Desnickaja for the separation as a subdialect of a degree with others of the group of subvarieties of central Gheg. According to Gjinari, the characteristic feature of the diphthongization of the vowel *i* (*mik* > *mëik*) in these subvarieties distinguishes these subvarieties as a group, but not as a separate subdialect. There are common features with the subvarieties of Central Albania with which they form a subdialect (Gjinari 1975: 44). But this contradiction is not encountered in the textual versions of the Albanian dialectology published after 1975.

In the dialect studies of Albanian there have been many discussions about the notion of transitional subvarieties. It is about the existence of a wide generation of subvarieties on the left side of the Shkumbin river, which, to various degrees, combine features of one dialect and the other.

There are some views on transitional subvarieties in Albanian:

1) transitional subvarieties in the Albanian language are those dialects that have features of Gheg and Tosk Albanian, regardless of their degree of generalization (Gjinari 1963, Desnickaja 1960).

2) transitional subvarieties in the Albanian language are those dialects in which the nasality of Gheg and the rhoticism of Tosk Albanian coexist, more precisely, even special cases of each other (Çeliku 1964).

3) transitional subvarieties in the Albanian language are those dialects that have mixed five of the main features that distinguish Tosk and Gheg Albanian, especially the two most important: nasality and rhoticism, adding that in common with these are found other features mixed of both dialects of Albanian (Gjinari 1966, 1969, 1975, 1988, 1989; Gjinari & Shkurtaj 1997, 2013).

Opinions about transitional subvarieties vary from one author to another, which is explained either due to the absence of data, or due to the absence of a clear criteria for their evaluation, or due to the inaccurate application of a criteria (Beci 2016: 323-325).

First, Bahri Beci asked questions about the term transitional used for these subvarieties, because according to him transitional is called a temporary state of an object or phenomenon in its transition from a first state to a new state, but in this case one cannot speak of a temporary condition. From 1967 until later publications, Beci stands by the view that in the south of Shkumbin river, the border of so-called transitional subvarieties, there is a group of subvarieties that are different from each other, one pair are Gheg with Tosk influences, one pair are Tosk with Gheg influences, and therefore they do not form and cannot form in the framework of the dialect division of Albanian, a separate dialect unit that does not belong to either one dialect or to the other, a hybrid creature, typologically different from the two dialects of Albanian (Beci 2016: 330-332).

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