The Present Suffix -ënj in Albanian

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In Albanian, there are 5 present conjugations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem ending</th>
<th>-V</th>
<th>-C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsuffixed</td>
<td><em>di</em> ‘to know’</td>
<td><em>flas</em> ‘to speak’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffix -(n)j</td>
<td><em>bluaj</em> ‘to grind’</td>
<td><em>eci</em> ‘to go’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athematic</td>
<td><em>thom</em> ‘to say’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The category *eci* contains only the three verbs (*hipi* ‘to ascend’, *iki* ‘to go away’) in the standard language.

It is more widespread (in the *flas*-category) in dialects and in old Albanian.
Research questions

- What is the function of the suffix \(-i\) (< \(-ënj\)) in the different dialects of Albanian?
- What was the situation in Proto-Albanian?
- How can we relate this to PIE?
- Why are HIE (hipi, iki, eci) the only verbs with the suffix in modern Albanian?
Conjugation in Old Albanian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Imperfect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hipinj dridh</td>
<td>hipnjë hapë</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hipën dridh</td>
<td>hipnjej dridhnjej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hipën dridh</td>
<td>hipn dridh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hipënjëmë dridhmë</td>
<td>hipnjim dridhnjim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hipën dridh</td>
<td>hipnjitë dridhnjitë</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hipënjënë dridhënë</td>
<td>hipnjinë dridhnjinë</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In some dialects the suffix -i occurs only in some subconjugations of the type *flas*. We can distinguish the following types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIE</th>
<th>regular</th>
<th>umlaut</th>
<th>ablaut</th>
<th>'doppellaut’</th>
<th>s/t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>eci</td>
<td>hap</td>
<td>rrah</td>
<td>mbledh</td>
<td>dal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg</td>
<td>ecën</td>
<td>hap</td>
<td>rreh</td>
<td>mbledh</td>
<td>del</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aor</td>
<td>eca</td>
<td>hapa</td>
<td>rraha</td>
<td>mbloðha</td>
<td>dola</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Albanian dialects

The Present Suffix -ënj in Albanian

Milan Lopuhaä (Radboud Universiteit)
Dialectal results (summary)

Suffix \(-i/-ën\):

**Contiguous Tosk, southern Geg** Only in HIE;  
**Northern Geg** Two main patterns:  
- in non-ablauting verbs;  
- in non-umlauting verbs;  

**Arbëresh, Arvanitika** Suffix possible in non-ablauting (non-umlauting) verbs.
In the dialects where the suffix appears in non-ablauting verbs, it is used to distinguish present stem from aorist stem, especially in the plural:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>suffix</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3pl present</td>
<td>hapin</td>
<td>hapën</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl aorist</td>
<td>hapën</td>
<td>hapën</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Function of the suffix

In the dialects where the suffix appears in non-umlauting verbs, it is used to distinguish different forms in the present singular:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>suffix</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>hapi</td>
<td>hap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2sg</td>
<td>hapēn</td>
<td>hap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3sg</td>
<td>hapēn</td>
<td>hap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the dialect of San Costantino Albanese the suffix gives an
*imperfective/inchoative* meaning to the verb. Reasons why this is old
(alternative: degrammaticalisation of a present marker):

- Grammaticalisation happens more often than degrammaticalisation.
- In Greci (Arbëresh) and Muhurr (Geg) the suffix has a different form
  in the 2sg compared to the 3sg.
- The suffix is obligatory in the imperfect in many dialects (including
  the standard language); this may be just to resolve ambiguity!
In the dialect of Salamis (Arvanitika) the suffix is optional, except in HIE, and the form is different:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>optional</th>
<th>HIE</th>
<th>-ον</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>-εν</td>
<td>-ον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>-εν</td>
<td>-ον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>-εν</td>
<td>-ον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-εμε/-γεμε</td>
<td>-εμε</td>
<td>-ομε</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-νι</td>
<td>-ενι</td>
<td>-ονι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-εμε/-γεμε</td>
<td>-ενει</td>
<td>-ονει</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So in Proto-Albanian the suffix was possible in (at least some of the) *hap*-verbs, and obligatory in HIE.
We have found the following history:

- In Proto-Albanian, the suffix had an inchoative meaning, and was obligatory in HIE.
- In almost all dialects, the suffix lost its semantic value, and its appearance was in free variation with non-appearance.
- In contiguous Tosk, the suffix was lost; in northern Geg, the suffix was used to resolve ambiguity.
We can (mechanically) reconstruct PIE *-n-ie/o- > -ënj-.

We find similar constructions in Greek ὑφαίνω ‘to weave’ and Vedic huvanyati ‘to call’, but the concatenation need not necessarily have existed in PIE.

Semantically, the suffix continues the inchoative nasal presents known from Germanic (Goth. galuknan ‘to become shut’) and Balto-Slavic (Lith. pabuñda ‘to wake up’).
Next question: why are the HIE verbs the only verbs with the suffix -ënj- obligatory?

Hypothesis 1: These verbs were inherently inchoative.

To test this, we need etymologies.

These words are very likely not borrowed from Latin (-oj/-ej), Slavic (-as/-is), or Greek (never happens), so we must look for PIE origins.
Etymology of *eci* ‘to go’

- Usual etymology: PAlb. *aitatja-* < PIE *h₁oi-to-* ‘gone’.
- Problem: PIE *-to-t-ie/o-n-ie/o-*? Verb from past participle?
Etymology of *hipi ‘to ascend’

- Usual etymology: PAlb. *skup- < PIE kup- (Lith. kùpti ‘to rise’).
- Problem: Alb. *i can only come from *i(H) or *y < *uH.
Etymology of *iki ‘to leave’

- Usual etymology: PAlb. *eik- < PIE *h₁ei-k- (Lith. eĩk(i) ‘go away!’).
- Problem: No evidence for imperative *k outside of Lithuanian.
- Alternative: PAlb. *ik- < PIE *Hi-Hk- (Hitt. ākʲ-/akk- ‘to die’).
The hypothesis that these verbs had the suffix obligatorily because of their inherent inchoativity is hardly supported by etymological evidence.

Why did it happen only in these verbs?
Alternative hypothesis

- We need an alternative hypothesis to solve both issues.
- Note that *eci, hipi, iki* are verbs of motion.
Verbs of motion are occasionally found in *causative-inchoative pairs*.

**English:** *I break the glass* vs *the glass breaks*.

Verbs of motion are the inchoative counterparts to ’I put’, ’I remove’, etc.

**Example:** English *to move*, *to drop*, *to roll*.
Chadic languages have an *Intransitive Copy Pronoun* construction, in which the verb gets a suffixed pronoun mirroring the subject.

ICP has an inchoative and/or intransitive meaning.

**Kanakuru:**
- *nà por panda* ‘I took out the mat’
- *nà poro-no* ‘I went out’
- *à yili* ‘she raised it’
- *à yilo-to* ‘she got up’

In Hausa, ICP is limited to *je* ‘to go’, *zo* ‘to come’ and *ya* ‘to come’, where it is obligatory.
Example: Jaminjung

*Burduj ga-jga-ny langiny-bina jayiny ngarrgina.*

‘My grandchild climbed up a tree.’

*(Jalig-di) burduj ganarra-m thanthu C.*

‘(The child) is lifting that C up [into the car].’
Hypothesis 2

- Hypothesis: *ec, *hip, *ik were originally transitive verbs, of which an inchoative counterpart was created.
- The original verbs were lost, leading to intransitive verbs of motion eci, hipi, iki.
- Again, we need etymologies!
Etymology of eci ‘to go’

- Usual etymology: PAIb. *aitatja- < PIE $h_1oi$-to-.
- Problem: PIE *-to-t-ie/o-n-ie/o-? Verb from past participle?
- Alternative: PAIb. *aitatja < PIE $h_3$eit- ‘to bring’ (OLat. oit ‘take!’; Gr. οἴσομαι ‘bring (future)’).
Etymology of *hipi ‘to ascend’

- Usual etymology: PAlb. *skup- < PIE kup- (Lith. kùpti ‘to rise’).
- Problem: Alb. i can only come from *i(H) or *y < *uH.
- Alternative: PAlb. *hip- < PIE h₂i-h₂p- ‘to attach’ (Hitt. ḫappzi ‘to attach’, Lat. aptus ‘fitting’).
Etymology of *iki ‘to leave’

- Usual etymology: PAlb. *eik- < PIE *h₁ei-k- (Lith. eĩk(i) ‘go away!’).
- Problem: No evidence for imperative k outside of Lithuanian.
- Alternative: PAlb. *ik- < PIE *Hi-Hk- (Hitt. ākʲ-/akk- ‘to die’).
- Alternative: PAlb. *ik- < PIE *(H)ieh₁-to throw, perf. *(H)ieh₁-k- (Gr. ἤκα, Lat. iēcī)
Conclusion (Hypothesis 2)

- Hypothesis 2 explains why the suffix is obligatory in precisely the HIE verbs;
- is backed up by more plausible etymologies.
- However, the intransitivising function of the suffix -ënj- is not attested.
A final warning

Reconstructing Albanian is 'easy'; for instance, *ik* might go back to *hik* (attested dialectally), which might go back to:

- $h- < *H-, *sk^w-, *k^ws-$, any labial with s-mobile;
- $-i- < *-i(H)-, *-ei-, *-y- < *-uH-$ via delabialisation, reduplication vowel;
- $-k < *-k^w-$, perfect suffix.

This makes it very easy to find false positives.
Conclusion

- Albanian -ënj- goes back to PIE *n-ie/o-;
- Originally had an inchoative meaning, which was lost in most dialects;
- The suffix is used to disambiguate in northern Geg;
- There are two possibilities why the suffix is limited to HIE in Tosk:
  - These verbs were inherently inchoative;
  - These verbs were inchoative counterparts to lost transitive verbs;
- For both explanations we can find etymological evidence, but both have problems.