

# The Present Suffix *-ënj* in Albanian

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# Introduction

In Albanian, there are 5 present conjugations:

Stem ending	-V	-C
Unaffixed	<i>di</i> 'to know'	<i>flas</i> 'to speak'
Suffix <i>-(n)j</i>	<i>bluaj</i> 'to grind'	<i>eci</i> 'to go'
Athematic	<i>thom</i> 'to say'	

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.

- 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

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Present	<i>hipinj</i>	<i>dridh</i>
	<i>hipën</i>	<i>dridh</i>
	<i>hipën</i>	<i>dridh</i>
	<i>hipënjëmë</i>	<i>dridhmë</i>
	<i>hipni</i>	<i>dridhi</i>
	<i>hipënjënë</i>	<i>dridhënë</i>

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Imperfect	<i>hipnjë</i>	<i>hapë</i>
	<i>hipnjej</i>	<u><i>dridhnjej</i></u>
	<i>hipn</i>	<i>dridh</i>
	<i>hipnjim</i>	<u><i>dridhnjim</i></u>
	<i>hipnjitë</i>	<u><i>dridhnjitë</i></u>
	<i>hipnjinë</i>	<u><i>dridhnjinë</i></u>

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# More conjugation

In some dialects the suffix *-i* occurs only in some subconjugations of the type *flas*. We can distinguish the following types:

	HIE	regular	umlaut	ablaut	'doppellaut'	s/t
1sg	<i>eci</i>	<i>hap</i>	<i>rrah</i>	<i>mbledh</i>	<i>dal</i>	<i>flas</i>
3sg	<i>ecën</i>	<i>hap</i>	<i>rreh</i>	<i>mbledh</i>	<i>del</i>	<i>flet</i>
aor	<i>eca</i>	<i>hapa</i>	<i>rraha</i>	<i>mblodha</i>	<i>dola</i>	<i>fofa</i>

# Albanian dialects



# 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.

# Function of the suffix

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:

suffix	Y	N
3pl present	<i>hapin</i>	<i>hapën</i>
3pl aorist	<i>hapën</i>	<i>hapën</i>



# 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:

suffix	Y	N
1sg	<i>hapi</i>	<i>hap</i>
2sg	<i>hapën</i>	<i>hap</i>
3sg	<i>hapën</i>	<i>hap</i>

# History of the suffix

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!

# History of the suffix

In the dialect of Salamis (Arvanitika) the suffix is optional, except in HIE, and the form is different:

optional	HIE	-oɲ
-∅	-əɲ	-oɲ
-∅	-ən	-on
-∅	-ən	-on
-əmə/-ɲəmə	-əjmə	-ojmə
-ni	-əni	-oni
-əmə/-ɲənə	-əɲənə	-oɲənə

So in Proto-Albanian the suffix was possible in (at least some of the) *hap*-verbs, and obligatory in HIE.

# History of the suffix

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  $*-n-ie/o-$   $>$   $-ěj-$ .
- We find similar constructions in Greek  $\upsilon\varphi\acute{\alpha}\iota\nu\omega$  '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 *-ĕnj-* 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: PAIb. *\*aitatja-* < PIE *h<sub>1</sub>oi-to-* 'gone'.
- Problem: PIE *\*-to-t-ie/o-n-ie/o-?* Verb from past participle?

# Etymology of *hipi* 'to ascend'

- Usual etymology: PAIb. *\*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: PAIb. *\*eik-* < PIE *h<sub>1</sub>ei-k-* (Lith. *eĩk(i)* 'go away!').
- Problem: No evidence for imperative *k* outside of Lithuanian.
- Alternative: PAIb. *\*ik-* < PIE *\*Hi-Hk-* (Hitt. *āk<sup>i</sup>-/akk-* 'to die').

# Conclusion (Hypothesis 1)

- 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.

# Inchoativity and 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*.

# Example: Chadic

- 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.*  
go.up 3SG.S-go-PST tree-ALL MoMo/DaCh 1SG:POSS

'My grandchild climbed up a tree.'

*(Jalig-di) burduj gan-arra-m thanthu C.*  
child-ERG go.up 3SG.A>3SG.P-put-PRS DEM proper name

'(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: PALb. *\*aitatja-* < PIE *h<sub>1</sub>oi-to-*.
- Problem: PIE *\*-to-t-ie/o-n-ie/o-?* Verb from past participle?
- Alternative: PALb. *\*aitatja* < PIE *h<sub>3</sub>eit-* 'to bring' (OLat. *oit* 'take!', Gr. οἴσομαι 'bring (future)').



# Etymology of *hipi* 'to ascend'

- Usual etymology: PAIb. *\*skup-* < PIE *kup-* (Lith. *kùpti* 'to rise').
- Problem: Alb. *i* can only come from *\*i(H)* or *\*y* < *\*uH*.
- Alternative: PAIb. *\*hip-* < PIE *h<sub>2</sub>i-h<sub>2</sub>p-* 'to attach' (Hitt. *ḫappzi* 'to attach', Lat. *aptus* 'fitting').

# Etymology of *iki* 'to leave'

- Usual etymology: PAIb. *\*eik-* < PIE *h<sub>1</sub>ei-k-* (Lith. *eĩk(i)* 'go away!').
- Problem: No evidence for imperative *k* outside of Lithuanian.
- Alternative: PAIb. *\*ik-* < PIE *\*Hi-Hk-* (Hitt. *āk<sup>i</sup>-/akk-* 'to die').
- Alternative: PAIb. *\*ik-* < PIE *\*(H)ieh<sub>1</sub>-* to throw, perf. *\*(H)ieh<sub>1</sub>-k-* (Gr. ἦκα, 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.