# THE SLAVIC SOURCE OF ALBANIAN *VENIT(EM)* 'WANE', *MAHNIT(EM)* 'ASTOUND' AND CERTAIN OTHER VERBS
## Traces of the *-nǫti/*-nyti split in the Balkan south

*Abstract*: The shape of Albanian verbs borrowed from Slavic is normally determined by the Sl. infinitive (Sl. *-ati* → Alb. -at-; Sl. *-iti* → Alb. -it-). Surprisingly, however, the element -it- also occurs in certain Alb. verbs whose Sl. source does not have an *-iti* infinitive. Based on methods of external and internal reconstruction, it is argued that some such verbs (*venit(et)* 'wane', *mahnit(et)* 'astound') may have been borrowed from a Slavic dialect where the respective source verbs had an infinitive in *-nyti (*vę(d)nyti 'wane', *maxnyti 'swing'; cf. e.g. Slovene vę́niti, máhniti) – rather than *-nǫti, as in most Slavic languages (*vę(d)nǫti, *maxnǫti 'swing'; cf. e.g. Serbian vènuti, máhnuti). Since Sl. *y normally yields i in loanwords into Alb., a Sl. infinitive in *-nyti may be expected to produce an Alb. verbal stem in -(n)it-. Subsequently, the type could have spread (through proportional analogy) to some other verbs borrowed from Slavic (e.g. pjetit 'braid', bodit 'stab'). Since no Sl. varieties of the *-nyti type are currently found in the zones neighboring Alb., the theory might have interesting consequences for Balkan linguistic geography, perhaps suggesting a different past location of certain Sl. dialects (*-nyti type ranging further south) and/or of Albanian (further north).

*Keywords*: Slavic borrowings in Albanian, Slavic nasal presents, Leskien's class II, *-nyti, Slavic dialectology

1. Introduction[1]

As is well known, Albanian is rich in Slavic loanwords, which have been studied quite extensively: cf. especially Svane 1992 and Ylli 1997, both with references to numerous earlier works, including key studies such as Miklosich 1870, Seliščev/Селищев 1931 or Desnickaja/Десницкая 1963. An excellent, up-to-date overview written in Albanian can also be found in Ismajli 2015.

These loanwords belong to a number of different linguistic strata – which is natural, given that they reflect well over a thousand years of contact between Albanian and various Slavic dialects, beginning with the influx of the Slavs into the Balkans in the 6th century CE. Thus, while some of the items are recent borrowings of words familiar from the neighboring Slavic idioms, certain others are evidently of considerable age and were probably borrowed from Slavic varieties that are not directly attested (as they were never written down and have since been assimilated).

Items of this latter type may be quite relevant not only for the study of the contacts between Slavs and Albanians (as well as other historical and present populations in the Balkans), but also for Slavic-internal matters: namely, certain features of South Slavic dialects that used to exist in the Balkans may only be known to us through borrowings into the other Balkan languages, such as Albanian. Thus, we know of quite a number of Slavic lexemes attested as borrowings in the non-Slavic Balkan languages (chiefly Albanian, Greek and Romanian) that are not presently found anymore in any Slavic language in the region. Consider examples[2] such as:

(1)    Alb. *harabel* 'sparrow' ← Sl. *\*vorbljь* (Pol. *wróbel* etc.; unknown in B/C/S, Mac. and Bg., where *\*vorbьcь* is found instead [B/C/S *vrábac*, Bg. *vrabèc*]; in SSl., *\*vorbljь* is known only in Slovene [Sln. dial. *vrábelj* next to stand. *vrábec*]; Orel 1998:*s.v.*)

(2)    Alb. *hurbë* 'sip' ← Sl. *\*xъrb-* 'to slurp' (unknown in SSl.; attested only in Czech [Cz. dial. *chrbat'*]; elsewhere in Sl., one finds the variants *\*sъrb-* [Pol. arch. *sarbać*] and *\*sьrb-* [Ru. *sёrbat'*, Pol. *siorbać*]; Schumacher & Matzinger 2013:259-260[3])

We also possibly have some examples of Slavic items not directly attested in any Slavic language at all, and thus only known from borrowings into Albanian. However, such cases are on the whole much less certain[4]. Cf. (Orel 1998:*s.vv.*):

(3)    Alb. *bolbë* 'misery' ← Sl. *\*bolьba* (unattested in Sl., but analyzable as root *\*bol-* 'hurt' [Ru. *bolét'*, Pol. *boleć*, B/C/S *bòleti*] and suffix *\*-ьba*)

(4)    Alb. *deltinë* 'clay' ← Sl. *\*del(b)tina* (unattested in Sl., but analyzable as a derivative in *\*-ina* from the noun *\*del(b)to* 'chisel' [B/C/S *dléto*, Cz. arch. *dletko*], variant of *\*dol(b)to* [Ru. *dolotó*, Pol. *dłuto* etc.])

(5)    Alb. *llacë* 'ladder' ← Sl. *\*lazьca* (unattested in Sl., but analyzable as root *\*laz-* 'crawl' [Ru. *lázit'*, Pol. *łazić*, B/C/S *läziti*] and suffix *\*-ьca*)

Thus, data from languages such as Albanian allow us to prove that these items once existed in South Slavic dialects – either in varieties which are now lost and were never recorded in writing, or in varieties which are known to us, but which have lost the relevant words.

This approach is most often applied to lexical items and sometimes also to phonological phenomena. But in principle, it may be utilized in the field of historical morphology as well: a given morphological trait, currently absent from the Slavic dialects in the Balkans, may have left some traces in borrowings into Albanian. Thus, we could surmise that this feature once existed in Slavic varieties neighboring Albanian.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate one such case. We shall see that a curious anomaly found in several Slavic verbs borrowed into Albanian may allow us to speculate that a morphological feature currently unknown in the South Slavic dialects adjacent to Albanian once existed in that area.

2. Regular patterns of Slavic → Albanian verbal borrowings

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[2] General note: many of the Albanian examples cited in the present work are dialectal or limited to Old Albanian. Unless extremely poorly documented, they will not be specifically marked as such.

[3] In earlier research, this word is frequently treated as an inherited Indo-European item (thus e.g. Orel 1998 *s.v.*); however, the required phonetic developments are difficult to accept.

[4] In some instances, we need to reckon with the possibility that a word was formed within Alb. from elements borrowed from Sl.; other cases are generally less clear and Slavic origin is only one of the possible historical explanations (whereas, in fact, no fully convincing etymology exists).

As is well-known, Albanian borrowings of Slavic verbs usually follow a simple model: "A basis ending in *-t-* was derived from the infinitive of a given South Slavic verb"[5] (Schumacher & Matzinger 2013:194-195). This pattern is seen very clearly in Slavic verbs with an infinitive in *-ati*[6], which get borrowed as Albanian verbs in *-at-*[7], e.g.:

(6)     Alb. *dumat* 'think out' ← Sl. *dumati* [Ru. *dúmat'*, Pol. *dumać*, B/C/S *dùmati*]
(7)     Alb. *nuhat* 'smell' ← Sl. *njuxati* [Pol. *niuchać*, B/C/S arch. *njuhati* (today usually *njúšiti*)]

Similarly, Slavic verbs with an infinitive in *-iti* get borrowed as Albanian verbs in *-it-*, e.g.:

(8)     Alb. *vozit* 'row, drive' ← Sl. *voziti* 'drive, carry by vehicle' [Ru. *vozít'*, Pol. *wozić*, B/C/S *vòziti*]
(9)     Alb. *porosit* 'order' ← Sl. *porǫčiti* [Ru. *poručít'*, Pol. *poręczyć*, B/C/S *porúčiti*]

The above two patterns of borrowings are wholly transparent. Verbal borrowings from Slavic entering other classes in Albanian are rather rare and exceptional; cf. the following Old Albanian examples (Schumacher & Matzinger 2013:195):

(10)    Alb. *grabitën* 'plunder' (Variboba) ← Sl. *grabiti* [Ru. *grábit'*, Pol. *grabić*, B/C/S *gràbiti*]
(11)    Alb. *naçendetë* 'become smaller' (Bogdani) ← Sl. inf. *načęti* (pres. *načьne-*) 'begin (eating)' [Ru. *načát' načnët*, Pol. dial. *naczgroup nacznie*, B/C/S *nàčēti nàčnē*]
(12)    Alb. *sticon* 'incite' (Budi) ← B/C/S *stìcati* 'stoke (fire)'
(13)    Alb. *bdin* 'be awake, be vigilant' (Buzuku) ← Sl. pres. *bъdi-* (inf. *bъděti*) [Ru. *bdít bdét'*, Cz. *bdí bdít*, B/C/S *bdî bdèti*]

Finally, there are some rare cases of suffixless borrowings of the type Sl. *zatekti* → Alb. *zatek* / *zates* ~ *zatet* 'encounter, touch'; on these, cf. §7 below.

## 3. The problem: unexpected *-it-*

Just as it is perfectly clear how Albanian acquired verbs in *-at-* from Slavic verbs in *-ati* and verbs in *-it-* from Slavic verbs in *-iti*, it is far less obvious why the Albanian class in *-it-* also includes some Slavic loanwords that do not display an infinitive in *-iti* in Slavic.

We may distinguish two principal groups of such verbs with unexpected Albanian *-it-*. The first group comprises Slavic simple thematic verbs, in which both the thematic vowel *-e-* of the present tense and the infinitive formant *-ti-* are added to the stem directly (Leskien's class I; cf. fn. 6):

(14)    Alb. *pjetit* 'plait, knit' ← Sl. pres. *plete-*, inf. *plesti* (< *plet-ti*) [Ru. *pletët plesti*, Pol. *plecie pleść*, B/C/S *plètē plèsti*]
(15)    Alb. *grebit* 'scratch, rake' ← Sl. pres. *grebe-*, inf. *greti* (< *greb-ti*) [Ru. *grebët grestí*, Pol. arch. *grzebie grześć* (today usually *grzebać*), B/C/S *grèbē grèpsti*]
(16)    Alb. *bodit* 'stab, prick' ← Sl. pres. *bode-*, inf. *bosti* (< *bod-ti*) [Ru. dial. *bodët bostí*, Pol. *bodzie bóść*, B/C/S *bòdē bösti*] (poorly attested word, found only in Xylander's Tosk material in Mann; see Svane 1992:251)[8]

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[5] "Vom Infinitiv des jeweiligen südslavischen Verbs wurde eine auf *-t-* auslautende Basis abgeleitet".

[6] Leskien's standard systematization of Sl. verbal types (see Leskien 1990; first published 1871, 'classic' 2nd edition 1886) is based on present stems, while – as remarked above in the text – it is the form of the infinitive that is crucial here. Thus, some Sl. verbal types will be identified by the infinitive.

[7] Usually not umlauted to *-et-* in the paradigm, although there are some exceptions. (The umlaut of *a* > *e* is a rather productive process in Alb. verbal morphology; cf. 1sg *marr* 'take', 3sg *merr* 'takes'; 1sg *flas* 'speak' (*-s* < *-tj-*), 3sg *flet* 'speaks', etc.).

[8] Other examples belonging to this class are far less certain; see discussion in Svane 1992: 251–252.

Furthermore, the unexpected Albanian *-it-* items include two verbs with a present stem in *-ne-* in Slavic (Leskien's class II; cf. fn. 6). Such verbs, according to the conventional reconstruction, were normally coupled with an infinitive in *-nǫti*:

(17)  Alb. *venit* 'cause to wane' (used more often in the medio-passive voice: *venitet* 'wane, wither') ← Sl. pres. *vę(d)ne-*, inf. *vę(d)nǫti* [Ru. *vjánet vjánut'*, Pol. *więdnie więdnąć*, B/C/S *vĕnē vènuti*]
(18)  Alb. *mahnit* 'astound, stupefy' (also medio-passive *mahnitet* 'be astounded') ← Sl. pres. *maxne-*, inf. *maxnǫti* 'swing, brandish' [Ru. *maxnët maxnút'*, Pol. *machnie machnąć*, B/C/S *mâhnē máhnuti*]

The Slavic origin of all these verbs is universally accepted in the etymological literature, so that the fact of the borrowing itself is not controversial; for basic discussion see e.g. Orel 1998, Omari 2012, Topalli 2017 *s.vv.* (As concerns the semantic development of *mahnit* from 'swing, brandish' to 'astound' – where a number of paths are possible – see the above sources as well as Svane 1992:250, with further references. Note that this lexeme was later reborrowed from Alb. and appears in a number of Balkan languages, cf. B/C/S *mahnitati* 'rage', Rom. *mâhni* 'grieve'.) However, as was stated above, it is unclear why these Slavic verbs got absorbed into the Albanian class in *-it-*. The verbs do not have an infinitive in *-iti* in Slavic; furthermore, they do not even display a present stem in *-i-* (as is known, Slavic also had some verbs that used a present stem in *-iti* and an infinitive in *-ěti*, or more exceptionally *-ati*: cf. pres. *boli-*, inf. *bolěti* 'hurt' or pres. *sъpi-*, inf. *sъpati* 'sleep'). Thus, Slavic seemingly offers no direct source for the Albanian element *-it-*.

## 4. Preliminary observations

Let us first focus on the examples *venit(et)* 'wane' and *mahnit(et)* 'astound', because – as we shall see further below – they may hold the key to the solution.

As mentioned above, we would not expect such verbs to produce Albanian verbs in *-it-*. Rather, if we take the infinitive in *-ǫti* as the point of departure (let us recall that the shape of the Albanian borrowing normally depends on the Slavic infinitive), the most probable output would have perhaps been a verb with a stem in *-ut-*, *-ot-*, *-und-*, *-ond-* or similar, given that the Sl. nasal vowel *ǫ* is usually reflected as *u(n)* or *o(n)* in Slavic loanwords in Albanian.

In Serbian, which is the source of a large part of the Sl. borrowings in Albanian, PSl. *ǫ* regularly develops to *u* (cf. Serb. *vènuti* < *vę(d)nǫti*). Therefore, in particular, we would expect the relevant items to yield verbs in *-ut-* in Albanian. In fact, such a stem would have been supported quite well by the native Alb. lexicon, cf. (Orel 1998:*s.vv.*):

(19)  Alb. *lut* 'ask' < Post-PIE *lugʰ-tye-* or similar
(20)  Alb. *ngut* 'hurry' < Post-PIE *en-kut-ye-* or similar[9]

Accordingly, for our verbs, we would expect forms like the following:

(21)  Alb. †*venut(et)* (← Serb. *vènuti*) ← Sl. *vę(d)nǫti*
(22)  Alb. †*mahnut(et)* (← Serb. *máhnuti*) ← Sl. *maxnǫti*

Such forms are not found, however, and instead we have the familiar *venit(et)*, *mahnit(et)*. Why is it so?

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[9] These lexemes do not have a particularly compelling PIE source, but they do not seem to belong to any of the recognizable layers of loanwords in Albanian and they pattern morphologically like inherited items.

The question has not attracted much attention – which is perhaps not surprising, given that it only concerns a few isolated items. Many authorities are simply silent on the matter; cf. e.g. Topalli 2017:*s.v.* on *venit*: "Borrowing from Serb. *venuti*"[10]. Others state more or less explicitly that no adequate account exists. For example, Svane (1992:250) writes that "A transformation of this type into a type in *iti is unknown in Sl. and must have taken place on Alb. ground"[11]; he does not explain the postulated Albanian-internal mechanism, however.

## 5. Possible *ad hoc* solutions

As usual in such cases, it is possible to come up with various provisional explanations that could be resorted to if no truly satisfactory solution were available (to our knowledge, none of these *ad hoc* explanations is invoked in the existing literature, so it will be useful to review them here – imperfect though they may be).

Thus, for example, we could conjecture that the basis of the borrowing was the imperative form of the verb (which, in Slavic, featured the vowel *-*i*-):

(23)  Alb. *venit(et)* ← Sl. ipv. *$v\c{e}(d)ni!$ 'wane!' [Ru. *vján'!*, Pol. *więdnij!*, B/C/S *vèni!*]
(24)  Alb. *mahnit(et)* ← Sl. ipv. *$maxni!$ 'swing!' [Ru. *maxní!*, Pol. *machnij!*, B/C/S *máhni!*]

From the semantic and pragmatic point of view, however, it is hardly credible that these verbs would have been used particularly often in the imperative. Besides, we know of no other examples where a verb borrowed from Slavic into Albanian would be based on the Sl. imperative stem.

Alternatively, we could allude to the fact that the verbal suffix *-it-* borrowed from Sl. became marginally productive in Alb. in denominal formations (Svane 1992:255):

(25)  Alb. *djersit* 'to sweat' ⇐ *djersë* 'sweat', inherited Indo-European item (probably < Post-PIE *$swidertyeh_2$- or similar; cf. Gr. ἱδρώς 'sweat' < *$swidrōt-s$; Orel 1998 *s.v.*)
(26)  Alb. *ujit* 'to water' ⇐ *ujë* 'water', inherited Indo-European item (probably < Post-PIE *$ud\eta$ << PIE *$wod\ring{r}$ *wedn- 'water'; Matzinger & Schumacher 2013:236)

Yet we know of no Alb. nouns such as †*ven(ë)* or †*mahn(ë)* that could have served as the basis here. Needless to say, we will also find no such nouns within Slavic (†*$v\c{e}(d)n\breve{u}$*?? †*$maxn\breve{u}$*??), where the *-n-* is clearly part of the verbal suffix.

Finally, one could mention the fact that some Alb. verbs borrowed from Sl. show variation between the suffix *-it-* and *-at-*. This can be seen for example in:

(27)  Sl. *$\check{s}\c{e}tati$ 'go for a walk' → Alb. *shetat* (cf. Bogdani /shëtat-/) / *shetit*
(28)  Sl. *goditi* 'hit, strike' → Alb. *godit/godat*

Although the fact is quite well-known, it has not received particularly much attention. Orel 2000:203-204 only notes that "a few verbs were transformed" from *-at-* into *-it-*; see also Matzinger & Schumacher 2013:195. The cause of this phenomenon is presumably to be sought in the fact that some verbs displayed such 'doublets' in Slavic already (which is not surprising, given that both the class in *-ati* and the one in *-iti* were productive and widespread). Thus e.g.:

(29)  Sl. *$g\breve{u}ltiti$ 'swallow' → Alb. *gëlltit* 'id.'
      [B/C/S *gùtiti* 'press', Sln. arch./dial. *goltíti* 'swallow' (Pleteršnik)]
(30)  Sl. *$g\breve{u}ltati$ 'swallow' → hypothetical Alb. **$gëlltat$ 'id.'
      [Ru. *glotát'*, Cz. *hltat*, B/C/S *gùtati*]

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[10] "Huazim prej sll. (serb.) *venuti*".
[11] "Eine Umwandlung dieses Typs in einen Typ auf *iti ist im Slav. unbekannt und muß auf alb. Boden stattgefunden haben".

Perhaps, the existence of pairs like these may have enabled the occasional borrowing of Sl. verbs in *-ati as Alb. verbs in -it-, or of Sl. verbs in *-iti as Alb. verbs in -at-, or the Alb. variation between -it- and -at- in certain examples.

Whatever the ultimate reason for the variation -it- ~ -at- in a subset of verbs, however, it would be very difficult to use this fact to explain the abnormal shape of *venit(et)* and *mahnit(et)*. Neither of these verbs had a variant in *-ati in Slavic (such as †*vę(d)nati* or †*maxnati*), which could have yielded an Albanian verb in -it- in the indirect way described above. In fact, the only possibility would be to assume that the point of departure was, after all, *vę(d)nǫti* and *maxnǫti*, and that a Slavic-internal reflex of PSl. *ǫ was adapted as Alb. *a* before the secondary restructuring to -it- set in:

(31)    Sl. *vę(d)nǫti* > **venati* → Alb. **venat(et)* >> venit(et)
(32)    Sl. *maxnǫti* > **maxnati* → Alb. **mahnat(et)* >> mahnit(et)

The reflex *a* for PSl. *ǫ is of course well-known from parts of the Mac./Bg. dialectal area (including modern standard Mac.; cf. Mac. *raka* 'hand' < PSl. *rǫka*, Mac. *zab* 'tooth' < PSl. *zǫbъ*). It is not normally found in old Slavic loanwords in Albanian, however (cf. perhaps *padit* 'accuse', if ← Sl. *pǫditi* 'drive, chase'); in addition, the scenario described above in fact requires a sequence of complicated steps and is not attractive at all.

Thus, we may restate that there is so far no satisfactory explanation for the presence of -it- in the Alb. verbs *venit(et)* and *mahnit(et)*, both clear borrowings from Slavic. A convincing account should be based on some independently known circumstance related to either Slavic or Albanian morphology.

6. A new explanation: the PSl. dialectal difference *-nǫti || *-nyti in class II verbs

As a matter of fact, it seems that an easy solution is at hand. Andersen (1999, with rich further literature) demonstrated beyond all doubt that the 'standard' look of Leskien's class II verbs (present stem in *-ne- coupled with an infinitive in *-nǫti) was not actually the only pattern in Proto-Slavic – rather, it was only typical of one dialectal zone. Another dialectal zone, however, had a different configuration here, namely a present stem in *-ne- and an infinitive in *-nyti. Reflexes of the two types can be seen across different varieties of Slavic; today, the dialects of the *-nyti type are visibly in the minority, only found in the western parts of the WSl. and SSl. areas:

    *-nǫti:    OCS -nǫti, Ru. -nut', Pol. -nąć, stand. B/C/S -nuti, etc. etc.
    *-nyti:    Sln. -niti, dial. B/C/S (chiefly Cr.) -niti, USorb. -nyć, dial. Pol. / Sil.[12] -nyć, Plb. -nět

In earlier scholarship, the type in *-nyti was typically explained as a secondary innovation in all of the areas where it occurred; however, Andersen successfully shows[13] that it must be considered a variant of *-nǫti of Proto-Slavic age[14].

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[12] The controversies surrounding the status of Silesian as a Polish dialect or as a separate Slavic language are well-known; for the competing viewpoints cf. e.g. Kamusella 2004 and Rothstein 1993: 754-756.

[13] Andersen's material can be expanded somewhat; for northern WSl., cf. e.g. "notowane na zwartym obszarze dialektów tucholskich i w przyległych zachodnich gwarach środkowego Kociewia bezokoliczniki z -ny-ć (...). Infinitiwy z -ny-ć pojawiają się ponadto w dialektach leżących na pograniczu Wielkopolski, Mazowsza i Małopolski (...)" (Popowska-Taborska et al. 1977: 159-160). For the dialects of B/C/S, see now also e.g. Menac-Mihalić & Celinić / Менац-Михалич & Целинич 2016. We may note that in many of the Sl. varieties where the *-nyti infinitive is attested, it competes historically and geographically/dialectally with the type in *-nǫti – thus e.g. very clearly in Plb. and USorb. As regards the modern literary languages, only two embrace the infinitive in *-nyti, namely Slovene and Upper Sorbian.

Thus, it is argued here that Albanian may have borrowed the verbs under discussion from a Slavic dialect of the *-*nyti* type, i.e. one in which the relevant infinitives had the form *\*vẹ(d)nyti* and *\*maxnyti* (as e.g. in Sln.: *vẹ́niti, máhniti*) rather than *\*vẹ(d)nọti* and *\*maxnọti* (as e.g. in Serb. – *vènuti, máhnuti* – or Pol. – *więdnąć, machnąć*). A Sl. infinitive in *-*nyti* would have given an Alb. verbal stem in -*it*- entirely regularly, because the substitution of (the SSl. reflex of) Sl. *\*y* as Alb. *i* is the norm[15]; cf.:

(33)   Alb. *pi̯hatet* 'be exhausted' ← Sl. *\*py̯xati* 'pant, blow' [OCS *pyxati*, Bg. dial. *piha*, Sln. *píhati*]
(34)   Alb. *di̯hat* 'be exhausted'← Sl. *\*dy̯xati* 'pant, breathe (heavily)' [Ru. dial. *dyxát'*, Pol. *dychać*, B/C/S arch. *díhati dîšē* (today usually *dísati dîšē*)]
(35)   Alb. *dobi̯t* ← Sl. *\*doby̯ti* 'gain' [Ru. *dobýt'*, Pol. arch. *dobyć*, B/C/S *dòbiti*][16]

The hypothesis that Albanian borrowed *venit(et)* and *mahnit(et)* from a Slavic *-*nyti* dialect is especially interesting in view of the fact that no *-*nyti* dialects are currently known from the geographic area neighboring Albanian: the closest ones are found in the north-west zone of the B/C/S diasystem, while the remaining ones are located in the WSl. area. Thus, our hypothesis – although it must remain tentative in view of the scanty material – can be compared with the dialect geography and settlement history of the South Slavs in the Balkans. Namely, it would provide some grounds for claiming that the area of the *-*nyti* dialects once extended significantly further south in comparison with its current range[17].

The map shown below is reprinted from Andersen (1999:57). The numbered areas marked /// represent the four known areas of *-*nyti* dialects (1 – Slovene and dialectal B/C/S; 2 – Silesian; 3 – Upper Sorbian; 4 – Polabian). The arrows represent the reconstructed migration routes of the Slavs as reconstructed by Andersen, while the symbols • ○ ▵ ▴ denote various archeological corollaries of the Slavic spread.



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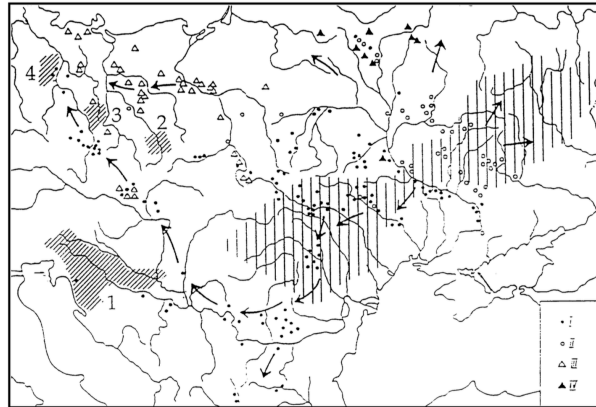
[14] Historically speaking, both *-*nyti* and *-*nọti* may be seen as equally unexpected modifications of the PIE verbal formant *-*new*- ~ *-*nu*- (the alternation is apophonic, i.e. morphologically conditioned); cf. Av. -*nao*- ~ -*nu*-, Ved. -*no*- ~ -*nu*-, Hitt. -*nu*-. Interestingly, Gr. -νῡ- ~ -νῠ- is likewise modified *vis-à-vis* the expected **-νευ- ~ -νῠ-; the alternant -νῡ- appears to match PSl. *-*ny*- exactly. Still, the similarity is presumably the product of independent (though to some extent parallel) innovations. Andersen considers the variant in *-*ny*- older than *-*nọ*-, deriving the latter from the former (p. 53-54).
[15] We may note that another apparent substitution of Sl. *\*y* is found in a number of old borrowings in Albanian, namely *u*; cf. Alb. *karru̯të* 'trough' ← Sl. *\*korýto* [Ru. *korýto*, Pol. *koryto*, B/C/S *kòrito*], Alb. *matu̯kë* 'hoe, mattock'← Sl. *\*motyka* [Pol. *motyka*, Bg. *motìka*, Sln. *motíka*]. As is well-known, Slavic *\*y* originally had the phonetic value [uː]; thus, theoretically, this substitution may be thought to reflect the older Sl. pronunciation. However, it must be borne in mind that a Gr. intermediary is perhaps possible in such cases (cf. Gr. καρoṳτα); see discussion in Ismajli 2015: 495, Svane 1992: 298–299 with further literature. At any rate, the default and most common substitution for Sl. *\*y* is Alb. *i*. (Note that Sl. *\*y* is not substituted with Alb. *y*; the similarity here is mostly an artifact of spelling conventions).
[16] In this example, *-*y*- is part of the stem and not the suffix; *\*do*- 'to, until' + *\*by*- 'be'.
[17] Though cf. also the final paragraph of this section for a competing or concomitant possibility.

Andersen assumes that the variation between *-nǫti and *-nyti arose in the Slavic homeland already; "[c]onceivably, in the Slavic Migrations, *-ny- forms were transported to many other places than the four regions we know of now along the same and other routes. In most localities where there was a *-ny- ~ *-nǫ- variation at the end of the period of territorial expansion, the *-ny- forms were eliminated in favor of *-nǫ- forms" (p. 58).

Thus, in order to account for the erstwhile existence of *-nyti dialects in contact with Albanian, we could assume that the stream of Slavic settlement that proceeded further south – appearing as the bottommost vertical arrow in the map – also carried some *-nyti-dialect speakers, who found themselves in contact with Albanian in the south-western parts of the South Slavic area.

Alternatively – or, in fact, additionally – it could be surmised that the original locus of contact between Albanian and Slavic may have been somewhat further north from its present position, given other indications concerning the historical location of speakers of Alb. (cf. Matzinger 2009:23, Rusakov 2017:556). In effect, the present-day vast geographic gap between Alb. and the Sl. *-nyti dialects becomes possible to cross.

## 7. Further implications: influence on simple thematic verbs

In addition, the borrowing of Slavic *-nyti verbs as Albanian -it- verbs may provide an explanation for the remainder of the unclear material mentioned in §3 above. Namely, as we saw, even certain Slavic simple thematic verbs (Leskien's class I) enter the -it- class in Albanian:

(36) = (14)  Alb. *pjetit* 'plait, knit' ← Sl. pres. *plete-, inf. *plesti (< *plet-ti)
(37) = (15)  Alb. *grebit* 'scratch, rake' ← Sl. pres. *grebe-, inf. *greti (< *greb-ti)

Thus, how can the theory regarding Alb. *venit(et)* ← Sl. *vędnyti and Alb.*mahnit(et)* ← Sl. *maxnyti be used for explaining a case like Alb. *pjetit* ← Sl. *plete-, inf. *plesti?

As we noted, there was no Slavic †pletiti, which would be the easiest direct source for Albanian *pjetit*. Also, no †pletyti existed, even in the *-nyti dialects: since the verb did not belong to the *-nyti/*-nǫti type, the infinitive was identical in all PSl. dialects, namely *plesti < *plet-ti. Hence, in this case, the form of the borrowed verb in Albanian could not have been based directly on any actual Slavic infinitive.

Nevertheless, borrowings like Slavic *plete- → Albanian *pjetit* would have been possible owing to a simple proportional analogy with Leskien's class II verbs like *venit(et)* and *mahnit(et)*. The mechanism of the analogy would have worked as follows:

1. Slavic *maxne- and *plete- could be perceived as sharing the same structure of the present stem ('something followed by -e-');
2. *maxne- was borrowed as *mahnit-* (owing to its dialectal infinitive *maxnyti);
3. thus, also *plete- could be borrowed as *pjetit-*, in spite of the lack of a corresponding infinitive (†pletiti, †pletyti or similar) in Slavic.

Schematically:

*maxn-e-  →  maxn-it  (based on real infinitive *maxn-yti)
*plet-e-  →  X
                    X = pjet-it (as though from a non-existent infinitive **pletyti)

Note that the above-described mechanism apparently did not affect all potential targets. It seems that there are also some examples of Slavic simple thematic verbs (Leskien's class I) and possibly of *-ne-verbs (class II) borrowed into Albanian as non-suffixed:

(38) Alb. *pip* 'touch' (attested 2pl *pipni*) ← Sl. *\*pypnǫti* (*\*-nyti*) / *\*pypati*, or *\*pipnǫti* (*\*-nyti*) / *\*pipati*? [B/C/S *pìpnuti/pìpati*, Bg. *pìpna/pìpam*] (probably a younger borrowing)

(39) Alb. *zatek* 'encounter, touch' ← Sl. inf. *\*zatekti* 'find, meet', pres. *\*zateče-* (< *\*zateke-*) [B/C/S *zàteći zatèčēm/zàteknēm*]

The latter verb is usually found in the form *zates ~ zatet*, but it is also attested as *zatek* (Mat); cf. Svane 1992:264. Note that *zates* may go back to Sl. *\*zateče-*, with the usual archaic substitution PSl. *\*č* → Alb. *s*; *zatet* may be back-formed analogically on the basis of the productive Alb. alternation *s ~ t*. As for *zatek*, it may have been abstracted from those (finite and non-finite) forms of the paradigm of PSl. *\*zatekti* that displayed neither the reflex of palatalized *\*kt'* nor *\*č*, but retained the *\*k* – e.g. 3pl pres. *\*zatekǫtъ*, *l*-participle *\*zateklъ*, etc. (For certain other explanations of the variation, including possible assimilations etc., see Svane 1992:ibd. with references.)

The above point is significant in that it shows that the creation of Alb. stems in *-it-* was not 'automatic': it the light of this evidence, it would be difficult to argue that a stem in *-it-* was simply chosen for the borrowed verbs *ven-* and *mahn-* because no other morphology was available. Rather, a tangible etymological source for the element *-it-* is required, and the hypothesis involving the Sl. variant *\*-nyti* provides such a source.

Still, although not obligatory, the mechanism of providing the borrowed verbs with a stem in *-it-* was in fact clearly preferred (as shown by the entire material presented in §3 above), and it is easy to understand why: it yielded items which displayed more transparent morphology (the stem-final consonant was 'protected' by the verbal stem in *-it-*) and which belonged to a productive inflectional class.

## 8. Final conclusions

The theory presented above states that the shape of the Alb. verbs *venit(et)* and *mahnit(et)* – with their unexpected *-it-* – can be explained if it is assumed that the words were borrowed from a Slavic dialect that used an infinitive in *\*-nyti* and not *\*-nǫti* in verbs with a present stem in *\*-ne-* (Sl. *\*maxnyti* → Alb. *mahnit(et)*). This corresponds exactly to the typical pattern of verbal borrowings from Slavic to Albanian, where the vowel of the Slavic infinitive determines the shape of the Albanian stem (well-attested Sl. *\*-ati* → Alb. *-at-* and Sl. *\*-iti* → Alb. *-it-*; thus, similarly also Sl. *\*-yti* → Alb. *-it-*).

This might point to the erstwhile existence of Sl. dialects of the *\*-nyti* type further south of their present range (and/or a more northern historical location of Alb.).

This pattern of providing borrowed verbs with *-it-* could also spread to some simple thematic verbs (Alb. *pjetit* ← *\*plet-e-*) by means of a clear proportional analogy with the type of *venit(et)*, *mahnit(et)*, based on the similarity of the present stem in *\*-e-*.

Symbols and abbreviations

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| * | reconstructed form | | ← | is borrowed from |
| ** | expected form or insecure / indirectly inferable reconstruction | | → | is borrowed into/as |
| | | | Alb. | Albanian |
| † | unjustified reconstruction (constructed for the sake of argumentation) | | arch. | archaic |
| | | | Av. | Avestan |
| < | phonologically develops from | | B/C/S | Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian |
| > | phonologically develops into | | Bg. | Bulgarian |
| << | develops from (including morphological processes) | | Cr. | Croatian |
| | | | Cz. | Czech |
| >> | develops into (including morphological processes) | | dial. | dialectal |
| | | | Gr. | Ancient Greek |
| ⇐ | is derived from | | Hitt. | Hittite |
| ⇒ | is the derivational base for | | inf. | infinitive |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ipv. | imperative | *s.v(v).* | *sub verbo/-is*; under the relevant |
| Mac. | Macedonian | | heading(s) |
| OCS | Old Church Slavic | Serb. | Serbian |
| PIE | Proto-Indo-European | sg | singular |
| pl | plural | Sil. | Silesian |
| Plb. | Polabian | Sl. | Slavic |
| Pol. | Polish | Sln. | Slovene |
| pres. | present | SSl. | South Slavic |
| PSl. | Proto-Slavic | USorb. | Upper Sorbian |
| Rom. | Romanian | Ved. | Vedic Sanskrit |
| Ru. | Russian | WSl. | West Slavic |

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