

The Modal Aorist in the Balkan Linguistic League

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1. Introduction

As is well known, what FRIEDMAN & JOSEPH (Forthcoming) call the Dental Modal Subordinator (henceforth DMS in the Balkan languages – Albanian *të*, Balkan Romance *să, si, s'*, Balkan Slavic *da*, Greek *na*, Romani *te*; see FRIEDMAN 1985) – can occur with preterites such as imperfects, perfects, and pluperfects to construct various types of conditionals and other modal constructions (optatives, etc.). In these constructions, a future marker (FUT) sometimes precedes the DMS and sometimes replaces it via loss of the DMS over time.¹ The recognition of the Balkan nature of such modal constructions is especially well documented in GOŁĄB (1964) and BELYAVSKI-FRANK (2003), which focus on South Slavic languages in their Balkan context. To this we can add the distinction adduced by GOŁĄB (1976) of a west/east split between the Balkan Slavic and the Balkan Romance that became Macedonian and Aromanian (and Meglenoromanian), on the one hand, and those dialects that became Bulgarian and Romanian, respectively, on the other. GOŁĄB (1976) focuses on verbal paradigms, especially the uses of 'have' and 'be' as auxiliaries, showing the influence of Aromanian on Macedonian, in the west, and Bulgarian on Romanian, in the east. The use of (FUT±)[DMS+]AOR, however, has not received attention. Such constructions occur in Macedonian and Aromanian, but not in Bulgarian and Romanian. Moreover, they are present in Albanian, Romani, and Greek, albeit with different positions in each of the respective systems. In this article, we shall examine Balkan modal aorists comparatively to determine the extent to which areality interacts with typology in creating convergent or parallel expressions. We shall conclude that while the modal aorist is not necessarily a Balkanism in the classic sense, it nonetheless merits attention in a Balkan linguistic context, and the division between West and East in both Balkan Slavic and Balkan Romance in this respect may have a Balkan areal component. We begin with Albanian, Romani, and Greek and then examine Balkan Slavic and Balkan Romance. We conclude that the modal aorist is a West Balkanism, consistent with the West/East split identified by GOŁĄB (1976).

2. Albanian

Albanian has the possibility of using DMS+AOR in ordinary irreal (hypothetical unfulfillable) conditional protases. In Albanian, it can be argued that DMS+AOR is a possibility that conveys affect, as illustrated by the following three sentences, all of which contain a clause that in English means 'if Sokol Olldashi were alive', but which, in Albanian, use three stylistically distinct constructions in the course of the

1 The preterite marking itself may be on either the auxiliary or a main verb depending on the construction, but such details are outside the scope of this article.

narrative. The context is a brief article that appeared in an Albanian newspaper:² (1) is the headline, (2) is a report, and (3) is the quotation on which the headline and the introduction to the quotation are based. The headline, which is intended to grab the reader's attention, uses *po* + DMS + aorist in the protasis, and a colloquial future imperfect (*do* + imperfect without the DMS) in the apodosis. The report in the article, which introduces the quotation, uses the colloquial future imperfect in both protasis and apodosis, thus engaging the reader's attention for the actual quotation, which uses a standard Albanian imperfect subjunctive in the protasis and future imperfect in the apodosis.

- (1) *Bregu: PD do ishte ndryshe, po të qe*
 Bregu PD FUT be.IMPF.3SG different if DMS be.AOR.3SG
Olldashi gjallë
 Olldashi alive
 'Bregu: the D[emocratic] P[arty] would be different if Olldashi were alive'

- (2) *Bregu tha se kjo forcë politike nuk do*
 Bregu say.AOR.3SG COMP this.F power political.F NEG FUT
ishte në këtë gjendje nëse Sokol Olldashi
 be.IMPF.3SG in this.ACC position if S.O.
do ishte gjallë.
 FUT be.IMPF.3SG alive
 'Bregu said that this political force would not be in the this situation if Sokol Olldashi were alive.'

- (3) "*Po të ishte gjallë, Sokol Olldashi, PD-ja*
 if DMS be.IMPF.3SG alive S.O. PD-DEF.F.NOM
do të ishte ndryshe."
 FUT DMS be.IMPF.3SG different
 'If Sokol Olldashi were alive, the PD would be different.'

Albanian can also have FUT+DMS+AOR in a kind of attenuated conditional or conditional wish as in (4):

- (4) *Më mirë do të desha t' isha një bretkosë*
 more good FUT DMS want.1SG.AORDMS be.1SG.IMPF a toad
 (NOLI 1916: 94)
 'I had rather be a toad ...' (Shakespeare, *Othello* III.iii)

2 *Koha jonë* 9 April 2016 <<http://www.kohajone.com/2016/04/09/bregu-pd-do-ishte-ndryshe-po-te-qe-olldashi-gjalle/>> accessed 29 July 2016. Throughout the present article, sources are given after the English translations for typographical reasons. With the exceptions of (8), (9), and (12), the English translations are ours. Examples given without attribution were collected in the course of fieldwork.

Note that Shakespeare's English uses a pluperfect auxiliary as a modal as a modal, a usage that today would be archaic or bookish. In ordinary modern English one would say 'I would rather be ...' or, more formally, 'I would rather that I were ...'

Albanian can also use a pluperfect with aorist auxiliary after the DMS in constructions meaning 'as if', as in example (5):

- (5) *Si me gozhda të qe ngulur...*
 as with nails DMS be.AOR.3SG thrust.PT
 'As if you had been nailed down ...' (GJOKA 2011: 131)

This usage is very close to one found in Macedonian, which will be discussed in §4.

One further fact of Albanian aorist usage worth noting in this context is that the aorist cannot be used to form an admirative.

3. Romani

In the context of this article, Romani is unique among the Balkan languages in two respects. The first is that the DMS, *te*, is the only native expression that is the equivalent of lexical 'if' in the various other Balkan languages (other equivalents of 'if' are all borrowed). The second is that Romani does not have a native distinction between the aorist and the perfect, although some dialects have developed perfect constructions using native material in contact with other Balkan languages (MATRAS 2004: 88, PASPATI 1870: 512).³ It is thus the case that DMS+AOR functions in contexts where other Balkan languages would have DMS+PERF. An example of this is a kind of optative construction given in example (6a) with the Macedonian equivalent in (6b):

- (6a) *Te na dikhljum tu džika late* (Romani)
 DMS NEG see.1SG.AOR you.ACC near her.LOC
 (6b) *Da ne sum te videl pokraj nea* (Macedonian)
 DMS NEG be.1SG you.ACC see.LPT near her.ACC
 'Let me NOT see you (= I'd better not see you) near her.'

In Romani, as in Albanian, the aorist can also function with the DMS to form conditionals. However, whereas Albanian DMS+AOR is always unreal, Romani DMS+AOR can be expectative fulfillable (KRAMER 1985, HACKING 1997), i.e. real, as in example (7):

- (7) *Te dirindjum tut me, oj ka čhinel*
 DMS touch.1SG.AOR you.ACC I it FUT cut.3SG.PRS
man.
 me.ACC
 'If I touch you, it [the sword] will kill me.' (CECH et al. 2009: 42)

3 In MATRAS' (2002) terms, the aorist is perfective non-remote. This terminology captures the fact that most Romani verbal systems do not have an aorist/perfect distinction, but we retain the older terminology here for ease of comparison.

This usage is not unlike the Albanian aorist in (8), which does not involve a DMS but is nonetheless an aorist in the protasis of a real conditional:

- (8) *Po s' erdhe ti, as ne s' vemi*
 if NEG go.AOR.2SG you neither we NEG go.PRS.1PL
 'If you don't come, we don't go either' (NEWMARK et al. 1982: 71)

In a sense, Romani and Albanian go together in that, unlike the other Balkan languages, they can use the DMS+AOR in ordinary conditional clauses. This is a typological similarity, given both the systemic and sociolinguistic differences between the two. As will be seen in §§4–6, DMS+AOR in Macedonian, Greek, and Aromanian are highly marked affective usages.

4. Balkan Slavic

The DMS occurs with the aorist in BCMS and Macedonian, but not in Bulgarian. Moreover, the BCMS usage is like the Albanian, whereas the Macedonian is more like the Greek and Aromanian usages discussed in §§5–6.

For BCMS, GOŁĄB (1984a: 185) cites the following unreal conditional example given in (9):

- (9) *Da go udariste, a bio bi lupnuo s*
 DMS him.ACC hit.2SG.AOR and be.PT COND crash.PT with
vama o pećinu.
 you.INS on rock.ACC
 'If you had hit him, he would have crashed into the rock with you.'

This example is interesting in two respects. First, the DMS+AOR construction corresponds almost exactly to the Albanian usage cited in (1), the differences being that the Albanian in (1) has a lexical 'if' in addition to the DMS and the conditional in the apodosis in the Albanian is the typical Balkan conditional, while the BCMS apodosis is the inherited Slavic one. The second interesting point is that the writer of this sentence was Vladimir Nazor, born in a Čakavian-speaking village on Brač, educated in Zagreb and Graz, and a partisan during World War Two, and the story is set in Istria.⁴ The usage thus represents the Croatian of an earlier generation and could represent a kind of West Balkan archaism. As Gołąb observes, such usage does not occur in Macedonian or Bulgarian.

Ordinarily, Macedonian does not permit an aorist after the DMS, but there is one usage that does, namely *kako* 'like, as, how' + DMS + AOR to mean 'as if' but with a specific nuance of 'apparently'. It expresses surprise of the type 'well, apparently, although I would not have believed it, it turns out that...' and is thus an ironic expression of 'I do not believe that...' as in examples (10) and (11):

4 The sentence, from *Veli Jože*, p. 3, is cited in STEVANOVIĆ (1986: 904). Gołąb's citation is from the 1969 edition of Stevanović (p. 867).

- (10) *Betonov kako da pukna, a?!*
 concrete.DEF like DMS crack.AOR.3SG Q
 ‘Well, [it appears] as if this concrete has cracked!’
- (11) *Filmskiot festival “Brakja Manaki” kako da stana*
 film.DEF festival Brothers M. like DMS become.AOR.3SG
omileno mesto za skandali
 favorite place for scandals
 ‘It appears the film festival “Manaki Brothers” has become a favorite place for scandals.’

Example (10) is an ironic commentary from Macedonia’s *Šarena revolucija* (multi-colored revolution), a protest movement in 2016 against the corrupt rule of (now convicted criminal) Nikola Gruevski and his political party, VMRO-DPMNE. Example (11) is likewise an ironic commentary, albeit in a different context. Part of the attenuation is in the lexical meaning of *kako da* ‘as if’, but the co-occurrence with a synthetic aorist is specifically Macedonian. Bulgarian uses the indicative complementizer *če* with the old perfect, e.g., *kato če e stanal* ‘as if it had happened’ or with a question word + aorist, e.g. *kato če li stana* ‘how [on earth] did it happen?’ or a lexical verb *izgležda stana* ‘it.appears it.became/has.become’.

5. Greek

Greek DMS+AOR and FUT+AOR are generally attenuated modals that express presumption, supposition, or dubitative surprise as in (12), (13), and (14):⁵

- (12) *θα το άkuses*
 FUT it.ACC hear.2SG.AOR
 ‘You must have heard it [somewhere]’ (HOUSEHOLDER et al. 1964: 106)
- (13) *Na me fónakses!*
 DMS me.ACC call.2SG.AOR
 ‘You should have called (to) ME’
- (14) *Les eγó na ta έspasa ta*
 say.2SG I.NOM DMS them.ACC break.AOR.1SG the.PL.ACC
piáta
 dish.PL.ACC
 ‘Me, could I have BROKEN the dishes?!’

Another use of DMS+AOR in Greek involves a modality of hoping that resembles the Albanian usage in (8) insofar as the aorist is used to refer to a future event. Thus, although complements of ‘hope’ (*elpízo*) usually use the future, MOZER (2007) notes

5 Cf. ASENOVA 2002: 235.

that it is possible to use the aorist with *na* when one wants good news about an event that occurred in the past, as in

- (15) *elpízo i étisi na ipovlíthike ebrothesma*
 hope.1SG.PRS the application DMS submit.3SG.AOR on.time'.
 'I that hope the application was submitted on time.'

Thus it can be said that Greek partakes of both the affective modality found in Macedonian, and the more conditional type of modality of Albanian and Romani, albeit still with some affective nuance.

6. Balkan Romance

As noted above, Romanian, like Bulgarian, does not have constructions of the type (FUT±)[DMS+]AOR. Such an absence also seems to be the case for Meglenoromanian. In this, its system is consistent with that of the Eastern Balkans. Both languages have presumptive constructions. In Romanian the construction is DMS/FUT/COND+INF 'be'+gerund / participle (cf. FRIEDMAN 1988, 1997, and FRIEDMAN & JOSEPH Forthcoming, for a Balkan perspective on the Romanian presumptive). Both Aromanian and Meglenoromanian have a presumptive construction expressed by FUT+INF (cf. ATANASOV 2002: 230–238, 248).

Aromanian, however, at least in its southern dialects, has what appears to be a calque on Greek as seen in (16a, b) and (17a, b):⁶

- (16a) *io s' nu -l agiutai?*
 I DMS NEG him help.1SG.AOR
 (16b) *eyó na min ton voiþsa*
 I DMS MNEG him help.1SG.AOR
 'What?! I didn't help him?!' (BARA et al. 2005: 219)
- (17a) *ś- nu muri Mårkul'?*
 DMS NEG die.3SG.AOR Mark.DEF
 (17b) *na min péthane o Markos?*
 DMS MNEG die.3SG.AOR DEF Mark.
 'Mark didn't die, did he?' (BARA et al. 2005: 194)

It is worth noting that in RN Macedonia, such constructions do not occur. GOŁĄB (1984b: 107) writes explicitly that the aorist does not occur with the subjunctive marker in Kruševo, and MARKOVIKJ (2007) has no such examples in his work from the Ohrid-Struga region. Likewise CAPIDAN (1932), in his presentation of the Aromanian presumptive to be discussed below, has no examples using aorists from what is now RN Macedonia.

6 The transcription in BARA/KAHL/SOBOLEV 2005 is a close phonetic one. Here we have opted for standard Aromanian orthography of RN Macedonia – the only country where Aromanian has official status – as the phonetic details are not of concern here.

Romanian can use the aorist in such affective constructions, but it does so without the DMS, as in (18), where the fact that a perfect can be used in the same meaning is also illustrated:

- (18) *Cum de făcui / am facut greșeală așa*
 as if do.1SG.AOR / have.1SG do.PT mistake thus
 ‘How can I have made such a mistake?’

This usage is similar to some uses of the DMS+the old perfect in *L* in Balkan Slavic, (related to example 6b) as seen in the fact that the Romanian ‘have’ perfect is also felicitous here.

However, southern Aromanian also permits the aorist in irreal conditionals much like Albanian and unlike Greek as seen in (19):⁷

- (19) *va nă ceamu la mitèori, ka ș-nu*
 FUT 1PL.ACC go.1SG.PRS to Meteora that DMS-NEG
kădeà neauă.
 fall.3SG.AOR snow
*Ńa piyename sta Metèora, na min *épese*
 FUT go.1SG.IMPF to M. DMS MNEG fall.3SG.AOR
to hionî.
 the snow
 ‘We would have gone to Meteora if it hadn’t snowed’ (BARA et al. 2005: 194)

In addition to the dubitative and conditional usages illustrated by (16), (17), and (19), Aromanian also has a presumptive use of (FUT±)[DMS+]AOR. The earliest discussion of the Aromanian presumptive appears to be CAPIDAN (1932: 470), followed by CARAGIU MARIOŢEANU (1968: 110–111), SARAMANDU (1984: 459), and NEVACI (2006: 153).⁸ The exposition below refers to these authors.

Capidan, who labels the paradigms *viitorul anterior* ‘anterior future’, only gives a paradigm for the future perfect (*va s-* + subjunctive perfect), but in the notes he includes examples with *va(i) ± s-* plus imperfect, aorist, and pluperfect as well. The examples with perfects and aorists are translated into Romanian using the anterior future presumptive (*va fi* + [past] participle) while those with the imperfect and pluperfect, which Capidan calls a past optative, are translated using the past conditional presumptive (*aș* [etc.] *fi* + [past] participle). Capidan also notes that *s-* can be omitted after *va*, especially when followed by a pronoun, but, as his examples illustrate, sometimes *va* (or *vai*) can also immediately precede the verb. Of interest to us here

7 In this example, we have left the orthography as in the original, aside from supplying standard Aromanian <ă> for what was rendered <ā> in BARA et al. 2005.

8 As Capidan notes, WACE & THOMPSON 1914: 242 observe the occurrence of what they call a future perfect formed with *vai* + aorist or perfect (*vai avushî, vai ai avută*) as well as a past conditional *vrea* + aorist (*vrea avu*) in southern Aromanian (Samarina), but they do not give any examples in context. PAPAĞAGI, Tache 1974 gives *va(i)* and *va s'* (for south and north Aromanian, respectively) + aorist as ‘anterior future’.

are the aorists, as in examples (20)–(23), cited by Capidan from PAPAĦAGI (1905), with his Romanian translations given in square brackets:⁹

- (20) *Vîră picurar vai aprease focul [va fi aprins]*
 some shepherd FUT light.3SG.AOR fire.DEF
 ‘Some shepherd must have lit the fire’ (PAPAĦAGI 1905: 386/6)
- (21) *minduî c-aestă va-l vătămă’ ficiorul [il va fi omorît]*
 think.3sg.aor that-this.F FUT-it kill.3sg.AOR child.DEF
 ‘he thought she would kill the child’ (PAPAĦAGI 1905: 283/35)
- (22) *va-nji adrăshi groapă [imi vei fi făcut]*
 FUT-me put.in.2SG.AOR hole
 ‘you’ve put me in a hole!’ [said by a devil suddenly falling into a trap]
 (PAPAĦAGI 1905: 469/27)
- (23) *Ma tse va s-featse muljearea dzîse*
 but what FUT DMS-do.3SG.AOR woman.DEF say.3SG.AOR
lammja [va fi făcut]
 monster.DEF
 ‘But what has the *woman* done? said the monster’ (PAPAĦAGI 1905: 407/28).

Examples (20) and (21) illustrate conjectures, while (22) and (23) involve admirative usages. All the examples are from what is now northern Greece.

Caragiu Marioţeanu, who was born in Hrupishte (Greek: Argos Orestikon), uses the label *viitorul II* ‘future II’ and gives complete paradigms for all four tenses and glosses in Romanian, e.g. perfect *va s-amⁿ cîntată ‘voi fi cîntat’*, aorist *va-lⁿ vîtîmai ‘l-oi fi omorît, îl voi fi omorît’*, imperfect *va vîtîmăm ‘era să-l omor, l-aş fi omorît, eram în stare să-l omor’* and pluperfect *va avşămu vîtîmată*, which she says has the same value as the imperfect. As can be seen, all tenses include *va*, but *s-* is included only for the perfect and is absent in the other paradigms. She also states that only with the perfect is the paradigm a future in the past and adds that *va* + aorist is a past presumptive, while *va* + imperfect or pluperfect are past conditionals expressing probability or possibility.

Saramandu, who collected his examples in the field (apparently Greece), uses the label *dubitativ (presumptiv)* ‘dubitative (presumptive)’ and distinguishes a present, perfect, and pluperfect. The present is *s-* + aorist, which is only interrogative as seen in (24). The perfect is the present preceded by *va* as in (25), and the pluperfect is formed with *va s-* + subjunctive perfect as in (26) (all with Saramandu’s Romanian translations):¹⁰

9 We have modernized the orthography in these examples.

10 We have left the transcription as in Saramandu’s original.

- (24) *si-l^u feĉ^u mini?* [*să-l fi făcut eu?*]
 DMS-it do.1SG.AOR I
 ‘Did I do that?!’ (SARAMANDU 1984: 459)
- (25) *va s-cîntâi[oi fi cîntat]*
 FUT DMS-sing,3SG.AOR
 ‘apparently he sang.’ (SARAMANDU 1984: 459)
- (26) *va s-am^u cîntâi [oi fi cîntat literally *oi fi fost cîntat]*
 FUT DMS-have,1SG sing,PT
 ‘apparently I sang/had sung.’ (SARAMANDU 1984: 459)

Nevaci follows Saramandu’s description, adding that the dubitative meaning is superposed on that of the anterior future, subjunctive perfect, and subjunctive-optative perfect.

As can be seen from the data presented above the label *presumptive* covers a complex set of phenomena in Aromanian. Here it is worth noting that the Romanian *prezumtiv* differs from its Aromanian equivalent in three important respects. First, in Romanian the main verb is non-finite and can be either present (gerund) or past (participle) and is accompanied by the non-finite auxiliary *fi* ‘be’, whereas in Aromanian the main verb is finite (this includes the analytic paradigms involving conjugated ‘have’ plus invariant participle). Second, the Romanian presumptive involves either the DMS *să*, the FUT marker *o ~ voi*, etc., or the COND marker *aș*, etc., whereas the Aromanian involves only FUT and/or DMS. Third, the Romanian present presumptive (with the gerund) is unambiguously presumptive, while the Romanian past presumptive (with the participle) is ambiguous between presumptive meaning and past subjunctive, anterior future, or past conditional, depending on the marker (see FRIEDMAN 1988, 1997 on disambiguation and also for the argument that all three sets of markers do indeed involve presumptivity). In contrast to Romanian, Aromanian has no present presumptive *per se*, but the Aromanian aorist can occur after DMS and FUT, syntagms that do not occur in Romanian. It is the Aromanian use of the aorist after DMS and FUT markers that constitutes its distinctive presumptive. As in Romanian, FUT and DMS with imperfect, perfect, or pluperfect have the potential for other modal meanings. This fact is explicitly recognized by Caragiu Marioțeanu.

7. Conclusion

The modal aorist provides a clear example of the West/East split within both Balkan Romance and Balkan Slavic, whereby Romanian and Bulgarian go together, and Macedonian goes with Aromanian and, in certain respects with Albanian and Greek, as well as Romani. While this split has resemblances to the one identified by GOŁĄB (1976), it is also distinct, and, with the addition of the BCMS data cited in §4, resembles a larger West/East split that has long been identified with Illyrian and Thracian, albeit that this split is purely conjectural owing to the lack of concrete sources. Here the innovation in Aromanian looks like influence from Greek, which in turn seems connected to Albanian, which for its part seems to have to do with the otherwise unusual BCMS construction and, perhaps, with Macedonian as the outlier, while Rom-

ani arguably has its own typological explanations. Thus, as with many other linguistic features, the modal aorist can be seen as a heartland Balkanism (cf. HAMP 1977), i.e. one that arose in the context of the contacts among speakers of various languages in the general area of the Vilayet of Monastir and neighboring sandzhaks and that achieved its current form during the Ottoman period. At the same time, however, the BCMS data suggest a more complex pattern of developments that nonetheless retains the Balkan West/East split identified by GOŁĄB (1976).

Abbreviations

ACC	accusative
AOR	aorist
BCMS	Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian
COMP	complementizer
COND	conditional
DEF	definite
DMS	dental modal subordinator (<i>da, tĕ, te, sã, si, s', na</i>)
F	feminine
FUT	future
IMPF	imperfect
INF	infinitive
INS	instrumental
LPT	<i>l</i> -participle (Slavic)
LOC	locative
MNEG	modal negator
NEG	negator
NOM	nominative
PERF	perfect
PL	plural
PRS	present
PT	participle
SG	singular

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