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Shtypur në Greqi **Εκτυπώθηκε στην Ελλάδα**

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AN ALBANIAN SOURCE FOR A GREEK FOLK USAGE[1]

A small piece of traditional Greek folk culture is seen in the particular utterances employed in the game of "peek-a-boo", a game played with babies in which an older person uses his or her hands to hide the face and then quickly uncovers the hands to reveal the face, making a certain noise when the face is revealed. One common such noise in Greek is κούκου or κούκου τζα (phonetically [kuku dza]), and in some families the game is simply named by reference to this noise, as in ας κάνουμε κούκου τζα 'let's play peek-a-boo'. There seems to be no conventionally agreed upon name for the game; κρυφτό and κρυφτούλι are used in different dictionaries (e.g. Stavropoulos and Hornby 1977, s.v. *peek-a-boo*; LKN, s.vv. κούκου, τζα) in describing the use of the κούκου (τζα) noises, but κρυφτό, at least, seems to refer more to the game of *hide-and-seek*, generally played by older children, and κρυφτούλι to secretive behavior in general.

As for κούκου itself, some dictionaries (e.g. LKN, s.v.) list its use in this game in the same entry as the onomatopoetic word for the noise made by the bird of a similar name, κούκος 'cuckoo'. The implication is that the use of κούκου can be understood as deriving from the word for the bird, or at least related to it. The motivation for the use of this noise and the accompanying implicit invoking of the bird probably comes from cuckoo-clocks, where the bird pops out to noisily chime and signal the hours (or other units). Further, it can be noted as well that from a behavioral standpoint, the cuckoo tends to be somewhat shy and is more commonly heard rather than seen. Thus, seeing a cuckoo come out of hiding, as the face comes out of hiding in peek-a-boo, would be cause for delight and surprise, making this noise entirely suitable for the game at hand.

The τζα element has a variant τσα (voiceless) that is reported by some speakers (indeed, as the preferred or only such form) and is recorded in some dictionaries **(**Stavropoulos and Hornby 1977 s.v. *peek-a-boo*).[2] Leaving aside the difference in voicing for the moment, which might just be a reflection of other variability one finds in Greek with τσ and τζ (cf. τσουγκράνα / τζουγγράνα 'rake, scratch', both forms cited in Andriotis 1983, apparently derived in some way from the onomatopoetically based

[1] I owe thanks to many Greek friends (and one Albanian) who answered my questions about the game and the utterances associated with it.

[2] There is also a further variant τα reported by some speakers, restricted just to the 'peek-a-boo' game usage.

related verb γρατσουνίζω[3]), it is fair to wonder what the source of τζα is. The only dictionary to comment on its source (LKN, s.v. τζα) says it is a "nursery word" (λέξη νηπιακή), and certainly its use and form make sense in that regard, based on the "allolinguistic" status – a marked functional status for linguistic elements involving being on the margins of "core" information-oriented communication[4] – posited for the sounds [ts] and [dz] by Joseph (1982, 1984, 1994 and elsewhere). Still, even with an allolinguistic rationale for τζα/τσα, one has to ask why, if the word has a nursery-related origin, it has the particular form that it does.

It turns out that there is a compelling source for τζα/τσα if one looks outside of Greek. In particular, Albanian has an interjectional word spelled < xa > (phonetically [dza]) that, as listed in Mann 1948, has a meaning 'here you are'.[5] This presentational meaning makes it especially appropriate for use in the game of peek-a-boo as the sound that accompanies the revealing of the face, since the face is being presented to the baby at that point. Presumably, then, if this source of the Greek utterance is accepted, this form would have entered Greek through Arvanitika, the Albanian dialects spoken mainly in Central Greece, the Peloponnesos, and Attica. The τζ ~ τσ variation in the Greek form noted above would then reflect the variability of realization of these sounds seen with other loan words, e.g. τσίφρα / τζίφρα 'monogram, signature' (both given in Andriotis 1983, with the τσ- form as primary, though some dictionaries (e.g. Stavropoulos 1988) give τζ- as primary) from Medieval

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[3] This derivation poses some problems in its own right, based for instance on the [γ] in the putative onomatopoetic source versus the nasal + stop combination in the nouns, on the otherwise unmotivated metathesis that is needed for this derivation to work, and on the fact that verbs in –ίζω are often denominative so that one might expect the verb here to be derived from the noun. Still, as an illustration of the variation, this example makes its point. See also below for more on the variation between *τσ* and *τζ*.

[4] That is to say, allolanguage is that part of language that is expressive, affective, colorful, and the like. This notion derives from the work of Roger Wescott; see especially Wescott 1975. It is noteworthy, for instance, that the lexical distribution of *ts* and *dz* in Modern Greek strongly favors occurrence in loanwords (which are in a certain sense, outside of the language system), in slang, in onomatopoeia, and in generally colorful usage. One might characterize allolanguage as "language with an attitude"!

[5] Çabej (2006: s.v.) relates *xa* to the verb *zë* 'put'. According to Eric Hamp (personal communication), the ultimate etymology of Albanian *xa* is to be found in the Indo-European root *g^{w}hen-, which means 'strike, kill' in Greek, Sanskrit, and Hittite but here has the meaning 'chase' (as also in the related Slavic *goniti* 'hunt, chase') – *g^{w}hen- occurs in *nxënës* 'student' (via "learner" as "the chaser/hunter/searcher (after knowledge)"). The form in question here, *xa*, is an old imperative; the *–a-* vocalism of *xa*, if not from the zero-grade directly, could reflect the absorption of a following weak object pronoun (thus *xë e 'take it' => *xa*); the meaning 'take (it)' gives a suitable basis for 'here it is' (note that Greek deictic νά has similar semantics).

Latin *cifra* (ultimately from Arabic), and note also τσέπη 'pocket', with voiceless [ts] but from a Turkish source with a voiced initial, *cep* (phonetically [dʒɛp]). Interestingly too, for some speakers of Greek, τζα can be used in its presentational sense outside of peek-a-boo, having much the semantic range of Greek deictic νά (as in νά το 'here it is!'), matching the Albanian usage given by Mann.

Moreover, a further utterance that may accompany the game confirms that Albanian is the source of τζα. In particular, even though κούκου τζα seems to be the most common noise associated with peek-a-boo in Greek, some speakers have reported using or hearing in peek-a-boo the sequence μπούλι μπούλι μπούλι μπούλι (phonetically [búli búli búli búli] during the part of the game when the face is covered,[6] with τζα then coming when the face is revealed, so that the whole utterance during the game goes "μπούλι μπούλι μπούλι μπούλι τζα!". This μπούλι μπούλι μπούλι μπούλι part confirms the Albanian origin of τζα, as the word μπούλι, which is meaningless as far as Greek is concerned, has a meaning within Albanian that makes it entirely suitable for this game. In particular, [buli] can be taken to be from the Albanian verb *mbyll* 'close, shut', as a third person singular past tense form.[7] This phrase would thus in its etymological meaning be "[when the hands are over the face] (It-has-)closed, (it-has-)closed, (it-has-)closed, (it-has-)closed … [when the hands open up to reveal the face] Here-it-is!". Phonetically the Greek [buli] would be an expected rendering of Albanian *mbyll*: the initial *b-* for Albanian [mb] conforms to prevailing Greek phonotactics at the likely time of borrowing (with voiced stops without a nasal "prop" being allowed in word-initial position) – note the possible parallel of Greek μπας 'perhaps' (phonetically [bas]), if, as Meyer (1894-5) suggests, it is from Albanian *mbase* 'maybe'; the Greek [u] would be the usual nativization for a front rounded [y] – there are no evident parallels from Albanian but one can note that μπουζούκι 'bouzouki (musical instrument)' with back [u] in each syllable is generally held (e.g. by Andriotis 1983: s.v.) to come from Turkish *büzük* 'constricted, puckered',[8] with its two front vowels; and the

[6] Admittedly, this particular utterance seems to be rare today; although it was given to me in 1981 by a then roughly 40-year-old Cretan woman (with an Athenian mother), many (younger) speakers today that I asked about it did not know it and had never heard it. One recalled hearing it, so my sense is that this may belong to an older layer of relatively recent Greek folk culture. Thus, even if not current, it is still a part of Modern Greek language use in a broad sense.

[7] I am grateful to Matthew Curtis of The Ohio State University for suggesting this possibility to me.

[8] Although they are not necessarily relevant to the point at hand, I am not sure of the steps by which the Turkish semantics of *büzük* gave rise to the Greek semantics of μπουζούκι; it is interesting that Turkish dictionaries (e.g. Redhouse 1984) give, as other meanings of *büzük*, 'anus; courage', the latter as a slang usage, though it is not clear how current these meanings are among present-day speakers (I thank Murat Yasavul of Ohio State University for his help in this matter).

Greek –λ- for the Albanian raised-dorsal lateral that is spelled < ll > is also expected inasmuch as Greek does not have that sound but rather only a voiced apico-dental approximant liquid.[9]

Moreover, this account is consistent with a large stratum of borrowings in the Balkans (discussed, for instance, in Joseph 1994) involving intense and sustained intimate contact among speakers. This sort of contact allows for the spread across languages of colloquialisms, kinship terms (note [babá-] in both Greek and Albanian, from Turkish), common discourse-related items (note the spread, for example, of *amá* in the Balkans, discussed for Bulgarian by Fielder 2009, and present also in Greek and Albanian, among other languages, whatever the ultimate source may be), grammatical elements (e.g. subordinating conjunctions and prepositions), and the like.[10] These non-"need"-related borrowings – non-"need" in that the words borrowed do not represent novel items of material culture that would require labeling somehow – offer some insight into the nature of contact amongst speakers of different languages in the Balkans, and the intense contact that they point to is exactly what is needed to give rise to the structural convergences that characterize the Balkan languages. In particular, in the case of τζα and even μπούλι μπούλι μπούλι μπούλι, one can envision it passing from one language to the other as Albanian speakers played with the babies of Greeks and Greeks saw and heard how Albanian speakers play with their own babies; such contact necessarily entails routine, presumably day-to-day, informal, friendly conversational interaction among Greek and Albanian speakers, the multilingual contact conditions under which structural convergence can develop.

Thus, even though just a small element of Greek folk culture, the game of peek-a-boo, like the faces that emerge from closed hands, in fact reveals something quite important.

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[9] Ideally, material from Albanian and especially Arvanitika pertaining to peek-a-boo should be added, as this is certainly something that is missing from the present account. I have managed to gather only limited information in this regard, from some Northern Albanian (Geg) speakers and not, unfortunately, from Arvanitika speakers, and while no speaker now seems to have the *buli ...* usage or even *dza*, the use of < xik > (phonetically [dzik]) was reported for the revelatory noise, and also *de*. Clearly more needs to be done here but even so, the current status of such utterances does not necessarily affect an interpretation of what might be presumed for Balkan usage in the 19th century or even earlier.

[10] In Friedman and Joseph (to appear), we introduce the term "E.R.I.C." loanwords – standing for "Essentially Rooted In Conversation" – to cover the classes of borrowings that require far more than just casual contact and seem to require sustained conversational interaction among speakers of different languages. The fact that this term can be seen as an homage to Eric Hamp, Balkanist extraordinaire, is not coincidental!

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