A Note on the Inflexional Morphology of the Vegliote Dalmatian Masculine Plural

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1. Introduction

This study identifies and seeks to explain an anomalous yet neglected aspect of the inflexional morphology of masculine nouns and adjectives in the Vegliote variety of Dalmatian Romance. To this end, a rapid sketch of the history of Vegliote is first necessary.

Dalmatian Romance was spoken in the Middle Ages along the coast of modern Croatia, from the islands of Krk (by its Italian name, Veglia), Cres, and Rab, in the Kvarner archipelago, in the north, through the mainland towns of Zara, Trogir, Split, Dubrovnik (formerly, Ragusa), to Kotor (in Montenegro), in the south. By the end of the nineteenth century it was spoken only on the island of Veglia, in a few fishing and farming communities[1]. Our linguistic knowledge of this last stronghold of Dalmatian is due almost entirely to investigations carried out in the final two decades of the nineteenth century, particularly by Matteo Bartoli (Bartoli 1906/2000), who gathered the linguistic testimony of the alleged last speaker of Vegliote, one Tuone Udaina (in its Italianized form, Antonio Udina)[2]. Udaina had apparently not spoken Vegliote for twenty years or so when Bartoli reached him in 1897 (Udaina died, aged 74[3], the next year), and his Vegliote appears strongly influenced by Venetian. Yet his linguistic testimony systematically displays structures and forms which cannot plausibly be attributed to any external influences, and which reveal many (especially phonological and morphological) characteristics of the old dialect of Veglia.

It should be stressed that what follows, although principally based on Udaina's linguistic testimony, also reflects the linguistic behaviour of other

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[1] For more information on Vegliote and its history, see Muljačić (1971; 1995; 2000; 2006); Zamboni (1976); Doria (1989); Mihăescu (1993); Trummer (1998); Bernoth (2008: 2731f.); Maiden (2016a).

[2] The general belief that Udaina was absolutely the last person to have some active knowledge of Vegliote is by no means obviously correct, and it is perfectly conceivable that other speakers survived into the early twentieth century. On this, see Strčić (1998: 260f.).

[3] For the question of Udaina's age at the time of his death, and other biographical details, see particularly Muljačić (2006).

speakers, described (for example by Antonio Ive, 1886) in the decades preceding Bartoli's investigations (and also reported in Bartoli 1906/200). The inflexional characteristics I explore here are, then, recorded not only in the speech of "the last speaker", but more generally in that of "the last speakers". They appear to be authentic and indigenous features of Vegliote "late Dalmatian".

2. Inflexional morphology of the plural in the Vegliote noun and adjective

To those who know Romanian or Italian, the inflexional morphology of a Vegliote plural adjective looks like an unremarkable example of the "eastern" Romance type (see Maiden 2016b:697–700), characterized by vocalic inflexional plural endings. Thus:

	Romanian		Vegliote		Italian	
	SG	PL	SG	PL	SG	PL
M	*bătrân* "old"	*bătrâni*	veˈtruŋ "old"	veˈtruni	*buono* "good"	*buoni*
F	*bătrână*	*bătrâne*	veˈtruna	veˈtrune	*buona*	*buone*

The foregoing examples are adjectives but we shall see shortly that, as in other eastern Romance varieties, the same inflexional pattern occurs in the noun. In fact Vegliote departs somewhat from Romanian and standard Italian, and is closer to northern Italo-Romance, in that it tends to delete final unstressed vowels (especially the mid vowels, but also [i] and [a]). There are consequently very frequent examples plurals with zero endings (see Bartoli 1906: §500). For example: MSG joi̯ŋ jag "a needle" ~ MPL doi̯ jag "two needles"; MSG joi̯ŋ pjas "a fish" ~ MPL kunt pjas "how many fish"; MSG kinp *or* kuonp "field" ~ MPL kinp "fields"; FSG la mwask, "the fly" ~ FPL ˈkoste mwask "these flies"; FSG ˈjoi̯na krau̯k "a cross" ~ FPL doi̯ krau̯k "two crosses". The plural ending -e (which I claim to have evolved from *-ai̯ < *-as) is exclusive to feminines, and is mainly encountered in nouns having a singular in -a, for example: FSG ˈkosta ˈkuosa "this house" ~ FPL ˈkoste ˈkuose; FSG la kluf "the key" ~ FPL le kluf, but also FSG ˈjoi̯na kluv "a key" ~ FPL ˈtuonte ˈkluve "so many keys". Final unstressed -i in the masculine plural of determiners and pronouns (whether free or clitic), in contrast, always remains intact and is never deleted – a fact whose significance will become apparent shortly. Some examples are:[4]

1) i̯ favˈlua toʧ furˈlaŋ ˈjali̯
theyMPL spoke allMPL Friulian theyMPL
"They all spoke Friulian, they did".

2) no li̯ ai veˈdut
not themMPL I.have seen
"I didn't see them".

3) zauk dei̯ buʧ per ˈmjaterli̯ ke i̯ ˈtira el kuor
yoke of.theMPL oxen for to.put.themMPL that theyMPL pull the cart
"yoke of the oxen to make them pull the cart"

[4] To facilitate the intelligibility of these examples, I have attempted to render Bartoli's system of transcription into the International Phonetic Alphabet. However, this carries inevitable dangers of misrepresentation, especially at the phonetic level, so that readers are strongly advised also to consult the original transcription as well.

4) i li ju kondaˈnut ˈtoʧi doi
theyMPL themMPL have condemned allMPL two
"They condemned them both".

5) i mai laˈvur i ai fat
theMPL myMPL works themMPL I.have done
"I have done my jobs".

6) kuond ke ˈfero i veˈtruŋ viv, ˈkoli
when that they.were theMPL old alive thoseMPL
ˈvapto, ju koŋ ˈtoʧi kuint ju faˈvlua iŋ vekliˈsuŋ
eight I with allMPL aS̃.manyMPL I spoke in Vegliote
"When the old people were alive, those eight, I spoke Vegliote with them all"

As in Romanian and Italian, -i is the sole desinence of the masculine plural. Even where it is today absent, its historically underlying presence can be inferred from certain alternations of the root historically triggered by -i (Bartoli 1906/2000, II: §339;§364;§448), such as raising of stressed [a] (see examples 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) and/ or various types of palatalization of the final consonant (examples 12, 13, 14, 15)[5]:

7) i veˈtruni ˈfero konˈtjanti "the old men were happy"
8) MSG ˈjultro "other" ~ MPL ˈjiltri[6] (< *'altro ~ *ˈaltri)
9) MSG kuoŋ "dog" ~ MPL ˈkwini (< *'kane ~ *ˈkani)
10) MSG kuonp "field" ~ MPL kinp (< *ˈkampo ~ *ˈkampi)
11) MSG skluov "servant" ~ MPL skliv (< *ˈsklavo ~ *ˈsklavi)
12) MPL ˈtoʧi kwinʧ "each and every" (< *ˈtoti ˈkwanti)
13) MSG korˈtjal "knife" ~ MPL korˈtjai (< *kolˈtɛllu ~ *kolˈtɛlli)
14) MSG pwark "pig" ~ MPL pwarʧ (< *ˈpɔrku ~ *ˈpɔrki)
15) MSG djant "tooth" ~ MPL djanʧ (< *ˈdɛnte ~ *ˈdɛnti)

3. The anomalous nature of masculine plural formation in Vegliote

Now Vegliote is in fact rather different from Romanian or standard Italian in that the relation between the ending -i and grammatical function is biunique: not only is the value masculine plural only expressed by -i (as in Romanian or Italian), but -i only expresses the value masculine plural. This is unlike the other languages, where -i is also associated with feminine plural: for example Italian (*la*) *croce* "the cross" ~ (*le*) *croci*, Romanian *cruce*(*a*) ~ *cruci*(*le*) vs Vegliote (la) krauk ~ (le) krauk. Among the hundreds of examples of feminines given by Bartoli, with just one exception[7], I find no feminine in plural -i, and no feminine plurals which show

[5] Examples form outside the nominal inflexional system are *aninch* [a'ninʧ] "forward" (< *e'nanti), *tierch* [tjerʧ] "late" < *'tardi (Bartoli 1906/2000: II§88).

[6] The final unstressed vowels are generally preserved after certain clusters, and in this case we always have -i in the masculine plural: e.g., 'jiltri "other". Nonetheless, unstressed vowels in this phonological context are not immune to various types of phonetic reduction (e.g., -e > -o, in DULCEM > 'dolko "sweet"; Bartoli 1906/2000, II: §499). Therefore, final -i in such cases does not directly continue historically underlying *-i.

[7] This is the very curious case of feminine (singular, as well as plural) skirp ("shoe"), whose phonological form suggests derivation from an original plural *'skarpi (cf. kinp "fields" < *'kampi). It seems unlikely to be a loan from any Italo-Romance variety (cf. *AIS* maps 1566, 1567). The form remains problematic, but entirely isolated.

traces of the original presence of -i in the form of root allomorphy. While there are masculines such as SG pwark ~ PL pwarʧ(i), SG sklwov ~ PL skliv(i), there are no feminines such as SG krauk ~ PL **krauʧ(i) or SG kluv ~ PL **kliv(i) "key". The status of -i as a uniquely masculine plural marker is not limited to Udaina's speech, but is omnipresent in the materials gathered by Bartoli (see, e.g., Bartoli 1906/2000, II: §§89; 90; 92; 93; 105; 109; 112; 134). Thus, in the data from other speakers the only forms in plural -i , or showing root allomorphy consistent with the historical presence of final -i, are masculines: *liech* "beds", *jultri* "others", *uachli* "eyes", *i pich* "the feet", *stivil* "boots", *feich nuastri* "our matters", *i sinch* "the saints", *puarch* "pigs", *skluav* "servant" ~ *skliv* "servants", *teinch jein* "so many years", *cuon* "dog" ~ *quini* "dogs", *latri* "thieves", *fazulji* "beans", *mauro* "big" ~ *mauri* "big", *pelo* "small" ~ *peli* "small".

Maiden (1996), following Reichenkron and others, argues that the feminine plural ending -e in 'eastern' Romance varieties derives not from Latin nominative plural -AE, as is widely believed, but from the accusative plural ending -AS, while masculine plural -i derives not only from nominative plural -I, but also and indeed mainly from -ES. The development -AS > -e and -ES > -i is purely phonological, and arises in the following manner: -ES > *-es > *-ei̯ > -i; -as > *-ai̯ > -e. Thus masculine plural CANES "dogs" > *ˈkanei̯ > ˈkani (It. *cani*, Ro. *câini*), and feminine LEGES "laws" > *ˈlegei̯ > ˈleʤi (It. *leggi*, Ro. *legi*), UIDES "you see" > *ˈvedei̯ > ˈvedi (It. *vedi*, Ro. *vezi*), while CASAS > *ˈkasai̯ > ˈkase "houses" (It. *case*, Ro. *case*), CANTAS "you sing" > *ˈkantai̯ > ˈkante (OIt. *tu cante*). As these examples very clearly show, this is a general phonological process, observable as much in verb morphology as in nominal morphology. The Latin desinence - AE cannot underlie feminine plural -e, particularly because its phonological development is incompatible with the expected development of -AE; the latter, yielding unstressed *-e in proto-Romance, should on the one hand have been deleted in word-final position in northern Italo-Romance dialects (see Maiden 1996: 170–175)[8], and on the other hand it should have provoked regular Italo-Romance palatalization of preceding velars, which it never does. As for -i in originally second declension nouns and adjectives, this derives directly (see Maiden 2000) from the Latin masculine nominative plural -I: PORCI > *ˈpɔrki > *ˈpɔrʧi (It. *porci*, Ro. *porci*).

Now, the Vegliote desinence -i is abnormal not only in being associated exclusively with masculine plural, but also in its phonological development. In Vegliote, the normal outcome of Romance final unstressed *-i is not in fact -i, but -e (Bartoli 1906/2000, II: §§313; 321; 491):

Latin	proto-Romance	later development	Vegliote	
UĔNĪ	*ˈvɛni		ˈvine	"come!"
SĔNTĪ	*ˈsɛnti		ˈsjante	"feel!"
	*ˈvɔles	*ˈvɔlei̯ > *ˈvɔli	ˈvule	"you want"
	*ˈfɔri		ˈfure	"out"
MARTIS	*ˈmartes	*ˈmartei̯ > *ˈmarti	ˈmirte	"Tuesday"

[8] Barbato (2010) argues that, in certain cases, Italo-Romance may indeed continue Latin -AE. But this in no way licenses his wider inference that my account of the phonological origin of feminine plural -e should be abandoned.

DĪCITIS	*diˈketes	*diˈketeį̯ > *diˈketi	deˈkaį̯te	“you say”
MIHI	*mi		me	“me (clitic)”
(ANTONIUS)		*ˈtɔni	ˈtuone	“Toni”

There are some very rare examples of the regular, expected, development of the masculine plural in the forms 'feʎe, 'feldʒe, and ˈfuldʒe “sons” (see also Bartoli 1906/2000, II: §§54; 60; 500), in the 'fulse testi'monje “false testimonies” of Antonio Depicolzuane’s deposition (Bartoli 1906/2000, II: §54) and in Cubich’s material (Bartoli 1906/2000, II: §87), e.g., 'duoteme de 'rise “give me some (grains of) rice”[9]. How are we to explain, though, that the general Vegliote plural -i, in addition to limiting itself to the masculine, is phonologically aberrant?

4. A loan from Venetian?

It may seem tempting to appeal to Venetian influence. A Venetian dialect had been spoken for centuries in Veglia, beside Vegliote, and it seems that all the “last speakers” of Vegliote habitually spoke a Venetian dialect as well. The specialization of -i as an exclusive marker of masculine plural (and of -e as an exclusive marker of feminine plural) is characteristic of Venetian varieties (see Belloni 1991: 80; Marcato and Ursini 1998: 64; Ferguson 2007: 115f.). A state of “asymmetrical” bilingualism, where Vegliote had for centuries been losing ground to the more prestigious Venetian, was bound to favour the introduction of Venetisms into the autochthonous Romance language of the island. Yet there are reasons why Venetian influence is considerably less plausible as an explanation of the Vegliote masculine plural-i than it might appear.

For example, it is odd that -i should be found most often, indeed with almost total regularity, in a structurally “intimate” domain of Vegliote grammar which one might expect to be one of the least exposed to potential external linguistic influences, that of determiners and pronouns: for example, jal ~ ˈja[l]i “he ~ they”, kost ~ ˈkosti “this ~ these”. Indeed, on the whole Venetian morphology tends to become adapted to Vegliote norms, rather than the reverse (see, e.g., Bartoli 1906/2000, I: §146). Moreover, Vegliote shows few other traces of borrrowing of Venetian inflexional endings (the example ˈpraį̯mo “first”, bearing a Venetian masculine singular ending -o, is conspicuous precisely because it is exceptional: Bartoli 1906/2000, I: §146). In fact, Vegliote typically deletes Venetian final unstressed vowels, rather than preserving them (see, e.g., Bartoli 1906/20, I: §144). All in all, the Vegliote desinence -i looks much less “Venetian”, and much more home-grown, than it at first appears. As for the unexpected phonological development of the ending (the fact that -i does not become -e as expected), I suggest that here, too, the explanation should be sought within Vegliote itself.

5. An “internal” explanation?

The opening of final unstressed [i] to [e], while very widespread in Vegliote, does not actually occur in every phonological context. When the unstressed vowel precedes main stress within the noun phrase or verb phrase, [i] may be preserved:

[9] These cases appear in contexts which seem formulaic and archaizing.

thus *kiˈtate > ʧiˈtuot “town”; *fiˈlare > fiˈluor 'to spin'; *ˈfrigere > *friˈgare > friˈguor “to fry”; fiˈkatu > feˈkuot / fiˈguot “liver”. The same phenomenon is observable in masculine clitic pronouns (both subject and object), and in masculine determiners, all forms that tend to precede main stress. For example, while the continuants of the Latin dative pronouns MI(H)I e TI(B)I > *mi “to me” and *ti “to you” regularly give me and te (te is also a subject pronoun; Bartoli 1906/2000, II: §§488; 491), the variants mi and ti also occur in pretonic position, as seen in examples 17, 18, and 21):

16) per ju me ˈbuosta “for me it’s enough for me”
17) mi e kasˈkut ˈfure del fuk “for me they fell out of the fire”
18) d anˈdu ti viŋ “from where do you come?”
19) se no te saį noˈtuor te se ne'gaį̂ “if you can't swim you drown”
20) jo te ʤai? “where are you going?”
21) jo ti kuar? “where are you running?”

Masculine plural determiners and pronouns only ever have -i [10]:

	article		clitic object/subject		stressed pronoun		demonstrative adjectives/pronouns			
	SG	PL	SG	PL	SG	PL	SG	PL	SG	PL
M	el	i	lo	(l)i	jal	'ja(l)i	kost	'kosti	kol	'ko(l)i
F	la	le	la	le	'jala	'jale	'kola	'koste	'kola	'kole

Vegliote demonstrative adjectives and subject pronouns almost always precede main phrasal stress, and clitics, too, are predominantly proclitic[11]. Proclitic position seems also to be responsible for the fact that the final vowels -i and -e of determiners are usually 'protected' from the otherwise general deletion of these vowels in final position[12].

To conclude, all the foregoing suggests that the -i found in the plural of Vegliote masculine nouns and adjectives has a subtly but significantly different origin from the plural -i of Italo- and Daco-Romance, and indeed that its status is unique among the Romance languages[13]. It never continues proto-Romance *-es (unlike what has been argued for Italian or Romanian), nor does it simply continue Latin second declension masculine plural -I in nouns and adjectives. Rather, it has

[10] There is one attestation of a masculine plural demonstrative koist, with apparent metathesis of -i (see Bartoli 1906/2000, II:§364), and one of a masculine pronominal plural kost “these”, in Udaina’s speech (Bartoli 1906/2000, II:§10).

[11] As in Italian, enclisis seems limited to the imperative and the infinitive (the Vegliote gerund is rare, and I can find no examples bearing clitics). But only the masculine plural (l)i always shows final -i, whereas for the first person singular and first and second persons plural we have both mi/ti/vi and me/te/ve.

[12] Moreover, quantifier adjectives, typically preposed to the noun, such as pauk “little” and 'twont' “so much” seem to behave similarly, always maintaining -i and -e in the plural (see Bartoli 1906/2000, II: §47). I find only one case of a masculine plural twont “so many”, without an ending, in Udaina's speech. Note also the (characteristically preposed) numeral 'kuatri “four”, whose final vowel is presumably introduced analogically on the model of masculine plurals preposed to the noun.

[13] But see Sibille (2009) for a somewhat similar case of restriction of masculine plural -i to determiners and pronouns, in Occitan.

all the characteristics of a form which originates specifically as the masculine plural inflexional ending of Vegliote (protonic) *determiners and pronouns* (where -i is historically derived specifically from the Latin second declension masculine plural ending -ɪ as found in the demonstratives ILLĪ, ISTĪ). From there we may infer that it has spread analogically to masculine nouns and adjectives. If this analysis is correct, then the Vegliote determiners and pronouns would seem to have exerted a notable analogical force on the rest of nominal morphology.

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Abstract

This study explores a neglected and unexpectedly problematic aspect of the inflexional morphology of the noun and adjective in nineteenth-century Vegliote Dalmatian. At issue is the masculine plural ending -i. Despite its resemblance to the plural ending -i of other 'eastern' Romance languages, such as Romanian and Italian, it is argued that this -i has subtly different synchronic and diachronic characteristics, and that it originates specifically in determiners and pronouns, thence spreading analogically to masculine nouns and adjectives in general.