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ABOUT THE ISTRIAN-ROUMANIAN FORMS OF THE *SPLIRA* TYPE

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the etymology of the Istrian-Romanian forms of spleen of the splira type and the corresponding term splină. After the introductory part about the Istrian-Roumanian idioms on the basis of the Istrian-Roumanian forms for spleen, the etymological proposal (which the Romanian expression sees as a new Greek loanword), offered in a couple of newer editions by the most reputable Romanian dictionaries, which are also actively engaged in etymology, is attempted to be slowed down and the old etymological solution of the great Meyer-Lübke confirmed.*

Key words: Istrian-Romanian forms, Istria, language, etymological proposal

A PROPOSITO DELLE FORME ISTRORUMENE DEL TIPO *SPLIRA*

SINTESI

Nel presente saggio si discute l'etimologia delle forme istrorumene che esprimono il concetto di "milza" del tipo splira e della rispettiva forma rumena splină. Dopo la parte introduttiva, nella quale vengono trattati gli idiomi istrorumeni, le forme istrorumene dovrebbero dimostrare quale errata la proposta etimologica offerta nei due dizionari moderni della lingua rumena (che concernono anche l'etimologia), dove il rum. splină viene interpretato come un prestito neogreco, e dare invece ragione al grande Meyer-Lübke.

Parole chiave: forme istrorumene, Istria, lingua, proposta etimologica

* The introductory part is not in proportion to the size of the article itself, but as we are dealing with the newest field data we believe it useful to publish the Introduction in English.

For the Istro-Roumanian forms we recorded we invented a graph which we've presented for inclusion into the *Istro-Roumanian Linguistic Atlas* (in print). It is a somewhat adapted Croatian Latin alphabet, to which graphemes were added expressing the Istrian-Roumanian special syllables:

- ã – posteriorly hollow a
- ɛ – very open e
- ə – semitone, as heard between *v* and *r* in the Croatian word *vr̩t* – corresponds to Roumanian *ă*
- č̣ – very softened č
- ś – softened š
- ẓ̌ – softened ž
- z – initial syllable in Ital. *zelo*
- ǰ – syllable between Croatian *ž* and *d*
- ɣ – velar sound fricative, as in Spanish *lago*
- lj̣ – Croatian *lj*
- ñ – Croatian *nj*

The accent is annotated by underlining the accentuated vowel.

The *Chakavian* forms recorded by us are marked as customary in the Croatian dialectological literature.

The forms from the literature are strictly transmitted as per the original.

1. *The Istro-Roumanian speech, in Brief*

The Istro-Roumanians are probably descendants of the Balkan Vlachs who are as Vlachs or perhaps Morlakes referred to by numerous medieval documents from Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina (here it should be underlined that in historical documents these names are used for some other ethnic groups as well – e.g. Orthodox inhabitants of Dalmatian Zagora – which is the reason why every record referring to the Vlachs or Morlakes can not, and should not, be immediately associated with the Roumanian ethnicity). The Vlach stockbreeders in Istria were mentioned for the first time in the 12th century, but the present-day Istroroumanophones are probably descendants of the Vlachs, who were at the end of the 15th century and in the early 16th century brought from the Dalmatian hinterland, i.e. from the area around the Dinara Mountain Chain and the Velebit Mts., first of all to the island of Krk and then to Istria, into the areas depopulated by recurring plagues and malaria. The majority of these immigrants were Croats. There are also some theories about the autochthonous nature of Istrian Roumanophones (Covaz, Maiorescu, Onciul), but these theses have been more or less rejected. Supporting the theory that they have come from the stated areas are the numerous Chakavian elements in the Istro-Roumanian idioms, which cannot be found in the Istrian autochthonous idioms and which many, mostly Roumanian, authors often, although without proper authentication, ascribe to the loanwords from the surrounding Slovene

dialects – the same as they do with *Chakavisms*, which exist in the Istrian autochthonous idioms but correspond to Slovene words (e.g. *v̩rb̩e* "willow", *ver̩uǰe* "chain", *šk̩ut̩e* "curd cheese", etc.). As late as the 19th century, the Roumanophones inhabited the area of Dubašnica and Poljice on the island of Krk (in 1819, Ivan Feretić, a priest, recorded the Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary, published by S. Pușcariu in 1929). Roumanian idiom cognate with the Istro-Roumanian is today no longer spoken on the island of Krk, for it ceased to exist somewhere in the first half of the 19th century. Only traces in toponymy have remained (e.g. *Vrhure* = *Vrh* + *-ure* "Roumanian plural form for the nouns of the neuter gender", *Sekara* "rye") and some appellatives (e.g. *puljić* "bird" [*<*Krko-Roumanian **puǰu* (confirmed as Istro-Roumanian) *<* lat. **pūllius* "young animal", REW 6826 – in standard Roumanian *pui* meaning "chicken", while *pasăre* denotes a bird], *čyra*, *čyralo* "sieve"). As far as Istria is concerned, the Istro-Roumanian idiom was more widespread than today. In support of this are numerous toponyms (e.g. *Katun*, *Kature*, *Fečori* = pl. of *fečor* "child, boy"), surnames (e.g. *Katunarić*, *Licul*, *Faraguna* *<* Roum. *fără gună* "without" + "shepherd's overcoat", *Poropat* = *poro* *<* Rou. *fără*, Istro-Roumanian *fâr(a)* "without", spoken by the Croats before the 15th century, while the Slavs did not yet know the phoneme /f/, and it was therefore transferred either as /p/ or as /v/, + *pat* "bed") and appellatives (e.g. *st̩p̩la* "a sheep that has not given birth to a lamb" = nominal Rom. adjective *sterp*, *stearpă* "unfertile": comp. Rom. *vacă stearpă* "barren sheep") (DULR, V/196, s. v. *sterp*).

The Istro-Roumanian, which is in view of the number of its speakers the smallest of the four historical Roumanian dialects, is today spoken only in ten Istrian villages or settlements. According to the basic division of the Istro-Roumanian idioms they are divided into the northern and southern idioms. The speakers of the first group live in the village of Žejane (Istro-Roumanian *Žejan*) situated on the northern slope of Mt. Učka northwest of Rijeka, the speakers of the second group on the northern and western edges of Čepićko Polje in a few hamlets of the Kršan Council. The village of Žejane has 102 houses (many in a very bad state, and quite a few of them abandoned) and one hundred inhabitants, 20 of whom are under 20 years of age. All of them understand Istro-Roumanian, while the great majority actually speaks it (including a few women who have come from neighbouring non-Istro-Roumanian villages and married the locals). It should be taken into consideration, however, that most of these villagers do not live permanently at Žejane but in the nearby towns (Opatija, Lovran, Matulji, etc.) but visit their native place mostly on weekends, where they have a cultural-arts society but have not had, for years, even a single pub. Still, the villagers are closely-knit and remain willing to look after their own traditions, and if the population would not

have continued to migrate from the village, the future of the Istro-Roumanian idiom would remain bright: according to the estimates by A. Kovačec, between 450 and 500 Istro-Roumanophones lived at Žejane in the early 1960s, while according to the 1991 census only 189 people still inhabited the village, which more or less corresponds to the number of the people speaking the language. In the south, the Istro-Roumanophones are dispersed in small villages and their total number is even smaller than at Žejane. They are not closely-knit and have no cultural societies – at Šušnjeвица indeed stands an inn which is mostly empty and often closed. According to our judgment (or, preferably, counts), Istro-Roumanian is spoken only by ninety people in the southern villages. There are virtually no children speakers left. According to Kovačec, between 800 and 1.000 speakers lived there in the early 1960s, while according to the 1991 census the total number of inhabitants in the places where Istro-Roumanian was still spoken, was 338, which in contrast to the case of the inhabitants of Žejane does not mean the number of speakers, and can in our opinion be arrived at by subtracting a little more than half of the people from the 1991 census from the stated number. The greatest number of the Istro-Roumanophones, i.e. 40, live at Nova Vas (Istro-Roumanian *Ńoselo* or *Ńosela*), 30 at Šušnjeвица (*Sušnjevice* or *Šušnjevice*), and 30 at Jesenovik (Istro-Roumanian *Sukodru*) with its appurtenant hamlets. In the remaining places with a single exception they can literally be counted on one hand. At Letaj there are three of them: a man who was actually born there (he understands the idiom well, but cannot speak it) and two women: one brought the idiom with her from her native Trkovci (today an empty hamlet belonging to Brdo), while the other acquired her knowledge at Šušnjeвица Primary School. The village of Brdo (Istro-Roumanian *Bārda* or *Bārdo*) is today inhabited by two people, both Istro-Roumanian, while at Kostrčani (*Kostarčān*) the Istro-Roumanian idiom is spoken by six people (including a man from Labin who grew up at Nova Vas and learned the Istro-Roumanian there) out of the eighteen villagers, and at Zankovci (Istro-Roumanian *Zānkovci*) by five people (one of them recently came from *Dolinščina*, the hamlet which remained empty after his departure) out of the six villagers. The hamlet of Miheli has three Istro-Roumanian speakers (two men who were born there and a woman who had come from Dražina and married here – out of the six people still living at Dražina, only one is Istro-Roumanophone. Of the four people living in the hamlet of Draga, two speak Istro-Roumanian, while in the hamlet of Jelavići the idiom is spoken only by one of its three inhabitants. Istro-Roumanian has been until recently spoken in few more hamlets: Trkovci, Perasi (Istro-Roumanian *Perāsi*), Grobnik (*Gromnik*) (the last speaker, Literat Pahor died in 1998), and Gradinje.

Therefore, the total number of Istro-Roumanophones does not exceed 200. To this number, however, those Istro-Roumanians should also be added who migrated to the city centres of Istria and Kvarner, as well as those who migrated to the United States, Australia and Western Europe – according to some investigations, the first generation of Istro-Roumanophone emigrants retains its native idiom well. To be absolutely precise, the number of the idiom's speakers should be increased by a smaller number of those originating from the families where chakavian is spoken and by various immigrants (with a single Albanian among them).

The expression *Istro-Roumanian* is of scholarly origin and has been used in Romance studies for more than a century. The inhabitants themselves, however, do not call themselves as such. In his *Historia di Trieste* published in 1698, the Italian historian Ireneo della Croce dedicated fifty lines to what he referred to as Chichis. He was the first to quote 23 Istro-Roumanian words and syntagmas with translations in Italian and Latin and further stated that these inhabitants called themselves *Rumeri*. If the statement is correct, the Istro-Roumanians referred to themselves as *Rumār* in the 17th century, which precisely corresponds to the ethnic *Rumân* (and to the Aroumanian *Armân*), which was according to the Lat. *Romanus* transformed in scholarly manner into *Român*. It is not clear, however, how the Istro-Roumanians could have lost their own name in two centuries and how this name could not have survived in any other Istrian idiom. According to all censuses carried out after World War II, the Istro-Roumanians have declared themselves the same as the neighbouring inhabitants in Istria. They do not consider themselves part of the Roumanian national body and call themselves as they declared in the censuses, while their narrower affiliation is expressed according to the place in which they live: *Žejānci* "the inhabitants of Žejane", *Sušņevci* or *Šušņevci* "the inhabitants of Šušnjeвица", *Kostarčānci* "the inhabitants of Kostrčani", *Novošāni* (chakavian *Novošani*) "the inhabitants of Nova Vas", *Brijāni* "the inhabitants of Brdo", etc. Particularly at Žejane they are declaring themselves Croats. The surrounding inhabitants call the Istro-Roumanians the Vlachs or the Chichi, but they themselves do not call themselves as such. They refer to their idiom using the adjective of the place in which they live: *Žejānski*, *Sušņevski* or *Šušņevski*, *Novošānski*, *Brijānski*, etc. or with syntagmas (*Kuvintā*) *po Žejānsku* (in Žejanski manner), (*ganĕj*) *po Sušņevsku* or *po Šušņevsku*, *po Novošānsku*, *po Brijānsku*, etc. In the southern villages, their language is also called *Vlaški*, "the Vlachian," or *Vlaška limbe*, "the Vlach language," or *po Vlašku*, "in the Vlach manner". In the literature we can read that for "speaking Istro-Roumanian" the syntagmas of the *po naški*, *po našu*, *po naše* (in our manner) type are also used by the Istro-Roumanians. According to our investigations, the syntagmas of this type in the Istro-

Roumanian always indicate, at least presently, the Chakavian dialect, but we presume that such was the case, at least in the southern villages for which data are at hand, earlier on as well, for the syntagma is used in the same manner by the Istro-Roumanians who emigrated to the States before or after World War II.

In relation to other Roumanian dialects, the Istro-Roumanian is most similar to the Dako-Roumanian, and to a great extent it differs from all Roumanian dialects of the Roumanian language due to the different adstrates: the Istro-Roumanian has no Turcisms, with the exception of those assumed from Chakavian idioms (e.g. *žep* "pocket"), it has no neo-Grecisms, and no phenomena conditioned by the so-called Balkan linguistic union (object is not repeated with personal pronoun, the syntagma *da + present* has no function of infinitives, but the infinitive, which is, in contrast to the standard Roumanian, always without *a*, is used as in Chakavian language) are known. For some centuries lasting saturations with the Chakavian idioms are the reason for the ever increasing word for word translation of Croatian grammatical and lexical models as well, which is why the order of words in the Istro-Roumanian idiom has been over centuries equated with the Chakavian dialect group. At the same time, two new grammatical categories were developed: neuter gender of the Slav type (formed with the aid of morphemes *-o*), which displaces the neuter gender of the Roumanian type (bi-gender), and verbal aspect (the Istro-Roumanian thus became the only Romance idiom which distinguishes perfective, imperfective and iterative verbs that are formed with the aid of Chakavian morphemes). Under the influence of the Chakavian idiom, in all places where Istro-Roumanian is spoken, except at Šušnjevića and Nova Vas, the opposition of the definite vs. indefinite article is lost for many nouns of female gender ending with *-ε* by the change of this uneconomical voice into *-a*, which equates the forms for definite and indefinite articles (e.g. *o kâprε* "one goat" - *kâpra* "the goat" --> *o kâpra* - *kâpra*). Indeed there are also elements that are common to the Istro-Roumanian and other Roumanian dialects. The old glossary tallies in all Roumanian dialects, including the Istro-Roumanian, find that the form for dative is equal to the form for genitive, the definite article is postponed, the accent is never put on the article and does not change in derived forms if there are no phonetic changes. The Istro-Roumanian, too, uses rotation of the intervocal *l*, which is transformed into *r*, but the rotation *n > r* (eg. *bur* "good" - Roum. *bun*, *mjre* "to me" - Roum. *mine*, *pâre* "bread" - Roum. *pâine*) distinguishes it at the synchronous level from the other Roumanian dialects, while at the diachronous level it brings it into relation to the idioms spoken in Maramureş. Some Roumanian linguists (Popovici, Caragiu-Marioţeanu)

thus insist that the Istro-Roumanian was formed north of the Danube, while Popovici further claims that the Istro-Roumanian is in fact a Dako-Roumanian dialect transferred to Istria.

As has already been said, the Istro-Roumanian idioms are basically divided into the northern and southern idioms. Between these two groups, however, there has been no connection for a very long time (and, considering the configuration of the terrain, there were none even at the time of immigration), which means that they have developed totally independent of each other.

The Žejane's idiom is more conservative than the southern idioms: it has retained more of the old Roumanian words (e.g. *kuvintâ* "to speak" at Žejane vs. *ganĝj* in the south, *anceleže* "to understand" vs. *rezumj* or *kapj*, *oste* "war" vs. *vojske* or *gverε*), the two case synthetic declension has been protected much better than in the south. Still, in southern villages the imperfect (*jo lukrâjam* "I was accustomed to work") and the bi-gender (e.g. *ur hrušt* "May beetle" [*Melolontha melolontha*] - *doj hrušture* at Žejane vs. *ur hrušt* - *do hrušture* in southern villages) have survived; so in this respect the southern idioms are more conservative than the northern ones.

Southern villages are more open to various innovations than Žejane. The difference in the borrowed glossary is great due to the different types of idioms in the Žejane and Čepić areas (e.g. *tisuć* "thousand" at Žejane vs. *milâr* in the south).¹

There is some difference between southern idioms themselves, and this at the lexical (e.g. *âze* "today" at Brdo vs. *âsteze* at Šušnjevića) and the vocal levels (e.g. *mulâre* at Šušnjevića vs. *mulâre* at Brdo). Until recently, the village of Šušnjevića, and a minor part of Nova Vas, differed from other places by the fact that the voices *c*, *z*, *s* od *č*, *ž*, *š* were not distinguished there (whistling voices were mainly realised): today there is only a single speaker who effectuates, although very rarely, his sentences by using only whistling phonemes and effectuates the opposition with somewhat softened rustling voices except *č* vs. *c*, therefore *č*, *ž*, *š* vs. *c*, *z*, *s*. Some effectuate these phonemes also by the stated opposition, while the rest of the Šušnjevića villagers consistently distinguish between rustling and whistling phonemes.

In all places – except at Šušnjevića and Nova Vas, where it has been consistently preserved – the tendency is noted that the final open *-ε* in nouns of female gender turns into *-a*, which still enables the opposition *sing.* vs. *plur.* also in the nouns forming a plural ending with *-ε*, although, as already said, it causes opposition between the articles: *o kâsε* "one house" - *do kâsε* "two houses" at Šušnjevića and Nova Vas; *o kâsa* - *do kâse* in other places. In the majority of the old nouns, i.e. those *sing.* and *plur.* opposition is still retained; as such nouns that substantially differ from the Istro-Venetian and Itali-

1 But: *Tisuć dráč in tîre!* "A thousand devils in you!" – recorded at Jesenovik.

an forms, the open *ɛ* turns into ordinary *e*, although the have no plur. ending with *-e* (e.g. *o muľare* "one woman" - *do muľer* "two women" at Źejane). The tendency is also clearly perceived in all Istro-Roumanian idioms of the forms for sing. and plur. of the nouns of male gender are equated (e.g. *ur škakovac* "one grasshopper" - *doj škakovac* "two grasshoppers"), although in the majority of the old nouns the more or less original plural type has survived (e.g. *ur pork* "one pig" - *doj porč* "two pigs").

The Istro-Roumanian idioms have from the times of migration developed outside institutions of any kind, which means, along with a century-old Istro-Roumanian-Croatian bilingualism, a lack of original folklore and any feeling of affiliation with Roumanian ethnicity. This, in addition to the constant decrease in the number of the speakers, is why the linguistic picture of the Istro-Roumanian idioms has substantially changed already after some two or three decades. But as the things stand today, the interval of change will consistently shorten until Istro-Roumanian totally disappears from everyday use. It can be presumed, however, that it will survive and be used longer abroad than at home.

2. Expressions for spleen

At Źejane, we recorded *šplira*, pl. *-e*, art. *-a*, at Šušnjevića and Nova Vas *splirē*, pl. *-e*, art. *-a*, at Jesenovik² *splira*, pl. *-e*, art. *-a*. At Brdo, Škabići, Trkovci, Zankovci, Miheli and Koščan, the Croatian loanword *slezina*, pl. *-e*, art. *-a* is used, while at Letaj the diminutive of the same word, i.e. *slezenića*, pl. *-e*, art. *-a* is in use. The Croatian loanword is also used, along with the domestic form, at Źejane: *slezena*, pl. *-e*, art. *-a*, while at Čepić the Croats have borrowed the Istro-Roumanian form *spīpra* for this word (by courtesy of Prof. Fabio Stemberga, the former student of the Faculty of Letters in Pula).

In the available Istro-Roumanian lexical repertoires,³ only Kovačec and Maiorescu present the following form: Kovačec the Źejane *špl'ira* "spleen" (AK, 191), and Maiorescu the *splină* and *spliră*.⁴

Our forms correspond to the Roum. *Splină*. In Roumanian dictionaries we can read:

a. "*splină* f. 1. organ limfatic moale și spongios de culoare roșie-violetă, situat în partea superioară stîngă a

cavități abdominale, care produce limfocite, anticorpi, depozitează globule rosii etc. Din gr. mod. *splina*, lat. *splen*." (DULR, V/174).

b. "*splină* f. 1. Organ anatomic intern, moale și spongios, de culoare roșie-violetă, situat în partea superioară stîngă a cavității abdominale, care produce limfocite, anticorpi, depozitează sângele etc. Din ngr. *splina*. (DEX, 1011).

Both Roumanian dictionaries available to us state that the term is a loanword from the neo-Grecian language, which is somewhat problematic considering that the Istro-Roumanian in fact has no neo-Grecisms and Turcisms (except those assumed by the Istro-Roumanians through Chakavian idioms – e.g. *žep*) – which is one of the linguistic indicators that the Istro-Roumanians separated from the Roumanian before Turkish and neo-Grecian words began to enter the Roumanian diasystem north of the Danube. The form *splirē* is therefore not a neo-Grecism, owing to which we insist that it is not economical to interpret in this way either the Roum. *Splină*, as is desired by the authors of DEX and DULR (according to the latter, the word came into the Roumanian language through neo-Grecian and, in turn, from Latin). Mayer-Lübke was certainly right when he derived the Rom. *splină* directly from Lat. *splēn*, *splēne*, "Miltz" (REW, 8164). It is therefore strange that the authors of these dictionaries did not take this into account. Which arguments led them to believe that the proposed etymological solution from REW should be rejected?. This means that in Roumanian dialects and standard language the form for spleen is a domestic word, which was unique in the entire Roumanian territory even before the Istro-Roumanians crossed the Danube. The form of the same etymology, i.e. *splina*, is also used by the Roumanians in Serbia, (by courtesy of Prof. Paun Durlić, Director of the Ethnographic Museum in Majdanpek).

The neo-Grecian word has the same etymology as Roumanian forms for spleen, while Latin etymon left traces in English as well: apart from *spleen*,⁵ Richard John Cunliffe cites the Latin etymon *splēn*, associating it with the Greek *splēn* and the Sanskrit *plihan* (CED, 304). Of the idioms of northern Italy, in which the same etymology was formed, let us mention just the Friulian *splēnze* "milza" (PIR, 1097) and the Venetian *spienza* "milza" (BOE, 689).

2 At Jesenovik we also recorded *lećica*, pl. *-e*, art. *-a* "fibrous casing around spleen".

3 IM, ES, TC, RS-VF1/2, JP.

4 The form with *-n-* must certainly be rejected as incorrect (Roumanian hypercorrectism), while final *-ă*, which is stated in both forms, should be taken with due reservation – words ending with *-ă* are also cited by Popovici, who happens to be more reliable than Maiorescu – for while we cannot prove with utmost certainty that the Istro-Roumanians did not speak like this more than a century ago, we are convinced that it is the case of "Romanian ear", which is accustomed to hearing this phenomenon. We insist that voice [I] had developed into a wide *e*, which we record as *F.*, before the time of Popovici's and Maiorescu's recordings.

5 Manlio Cortelazzo and Carla Marcato consider the Piedmont *splin* an Anglicism in the sense of "stizza, bile, collera"; from Engl. *spleen* in the sense of "hypochondria" it came into this Italian dialect through the medium of the French as a language of culture (DIDE 412).

O ISTRSKO-ROMUNSKIH OBLIKAH TIPA *SPLIRA*

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POVZETEK

Avtor razpravlja o etimologiji istrsko-romunskih oblik za vranico tipa *splira* in odgovarjajočega romunskega termina *splină*. Po uvodnem delu o istrsko-romunskih govorih na temelju istrsko-romunskih oblik za vranico poskuša kritizirati etimološki predlog (ki romunski izraz vidi kot novogrško izposojenko), ponujen v dveh novih izdajah najuglednejših romunskih slovarjev, ki se ukvarjata tudi z etimologijo, in potrditi staro etimološko rešitev velikega Meyer-Lübkeja.

Ključne besede: istrsko-romunske oblike, Istra, jezik, etimološki predlog

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